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ABSTRACT

This collection of six articles on oral language is a product of the cooperative efforts of the National Conference on Research in English, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the International Reading Association, the Association for Childhood Education International, and the National Council of Teachers of English. It is intended to acquaint educators with research into various aspects of listening and speaking and to emphasize the need for oral language instruction in elementary schools. The articles are "Oral Language and Personal and Social Development" by Walter T. Petty and Roberta J. Starkey, "Oral Language and the Development of Other Language Skills" by Robert B. Ruddell, "The Effects of Environment on Oral Language Development" by Frank B. May, "Listening: A Facet of Oral Language" by Gloria L. Horrworth, "The Evaluation of Oral Language Activities: Teaching and Learning" by O. W. Kopp, and "Three Statements Regarding Needed Research in Oral Language: by Ruth G. Strickland, Howard E. Blake, Anthony J. Amato, and Walter T. Petty. (JS)

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# Research in Oral Language

A Research Bulletin
Prepared by a Committee
of the National Conference
on Research in English

Walter T. Petty, Editorial Chairman
State University of New York at Buffalo

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# THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON RESEARCH IN ENGLISH

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1967 President

HELEN HUUS
University of Pennsylvania

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# Preface

In 1964 four associations—the Association for Childhood Education International, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the International Reading Association, and the National Council of Teachers of English—cooperatively published *Children and Oral Language*, an unprecedented undertaking. This bulletin, developed by a committee under the chairmanship of Helen K. Mackintosh, succinctly stated a point of view concerning the importance of oral communication and its role in the elementary school curriculum, identified basic characteristics of listening and speaking, and presented suggestions for instruction and evaluation. This bulletin effectively highlighted the importance of oral language in the school program and the instruction that needs to be given listening and speaking skills.

The present bulletin is a supplement to *Children and Oral Language* and is a natural outgrowth of the first cooperative publication. Its development was initiated by a fifth organization—the National Conference on Research in English—which assumed major responsibility in the planning and the writing. Active support from the four other organizations was received, however, in choosing the writers and approving the content. Thus, *Research in Oral Language* is the product of the cooperative efforts of five organizations.

The editor of *Research in Oral Language* is appreciative of the spirit of cooperation and acknowledges the assistance of Alberta L. Meyer, Executive Secretary of the Association for Childhood Education International; Margaret Gill, Executive Secretary of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; Ralph C. Staiger, Executive Secretary for the International Reading Association; and James R. Squire, Executive Secretary for the National Council of Teachers of English.

Appreciation is also expressed to the writers of the chapters in this bulletin, to William A. Jenkins, Editor of *Elementary English*, and to colleagues in the National Conference on Research in English.

Walter T. Petty

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# Introduction

Traditionally school programs have emphasized written language, and it is only in comparatively recent years that oral language has been recognized as deserving of instructional attention. Even now the allotments of teaching effort and program time to developing pupils' listening and speaking skills are less than those devoted to writing skills. This condition exists in spite of the evidence that as much as 95 percent of all communication is oral.

While many schools are generally making special efforts to provide opportunities for a wide range of oral language activities, too little actual instruction in listening and speaking skills is being given. This is partly accounted for by the mistaken assumption that no instruction in the skills is necessary since children ordinarily enter school with some ability to use language orally. There is also some prevalence to the belief that oral language is general in nature rather than consisting of the many specific skills, which is the actual case. Of equal importance as a reason for the lack of instruction is the fact that the oral language skills necessary for effective communication have been difficult to identify and the procedures for teaching those which have been identified are not well known.

Concern for the effectiveness with which people speak is increasingly being expressed. The authors of the bulletin *Children and Oral Language* stress that the cruciality of oral communication should force every teacher to carefully appraise his practices in teaching children to express their ideas orally with clarity, sensitivity, and conviction. They go further and state that the "oral communication skills must be taught well at all levels of instruction so that pupils may develop increased proficiency as a continuing process" and that balanced programs "with clearly defined goals and explicitly stated means for achieving these goals must be developed."

It is the purpose of this bulletin to help teachers and others concerned with elementary school programs more clearly see the importance of oral language, become better informed about the research evidence which has been gained regarding it, and make use of this knowledge in the development of programs and teaching practices.

Walter T. Petty

WALTER T. PETTY AND ROBERTA J. STARKEY

# Oral Language and Personal and Social Development

The child's learning to speak and listen is often taken for granted. Though we recognize that language is complex, and our personal experience with a second language indicates to most of us that learning a language may be difficult, the apparent ease and swiftness of a child's learning to use his native language deceives too many of us into not giving proper attention in school and in our homes to its learning. Particularly is this true for speaking and listening.

Not only may we not give appropriate attention to language learning and the many factors which affect it, we more often fail to recognize the effects of language development upon the total development of the child.

We propose to discuss briefly the nature of language and its relationship to thinking and learning, some effects of language development upon personality, and the roles some factors play in the development of quality and quantity in children's speech, calling attention when appropriate to research pertinent to these areas. This is not a complete review of research on a topic about which books have been written; it is intended as a reminder to many teachers of the importance of oral language in the personal and social development of the child and as a means of calling to the attention of other teachers information about which they must concern themselves.

Dr. Starkey is an Assistant Professor of Education at the University of Wyoming. Dr. Petty is a Professor of Education at State University of New York at Buffalo. This article was first published in the April 1966 issue of *Elementary English*, pages 386-394.

## The Nature of Language

Language is a social process concerned largely with communicating ideas and feelings. It is also a tool of man—essentially a tool that he uses in his thinking, in his communicative acts, in his social intercourse. It is the greatest force for socialization that exists and at the same time is the most potent single known factor in the development of individuality. Basically the linguist considers language as speech, a system or code which has two primary parts—the phonological and the grammatical.[1] Further, language has certain distinctive properties: (1) it is learned, (2) it consists of an arbitrary structured system of sounds and sequences of sounds, and (3) it includes a system of socially shared meanings—a system of conventional, arbitrary signs.

Within a society using a particular language there are many variations in that language—variations in intonation, stress, and articulation as well as dialectic differ-

[1] Susan M. Ervin and Wick R. Miller, "Language Development," *Child Psychology*, The Sixty-second Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education (Harold W. Stevenson, Ed.). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963, pp. 107-108.

ences. Variations in a language are related principally to geographical differences within the language community and to differences in socioeconomic status and occupation, with the kind of language a child learns apt to be most like that of his parents.[2] These facts, of course, are well known but they continue to fail to receive adequate curricular and instructional attention. The teaching of language as a static thing, as something that has a single form, and as something apart from the social development of the child, has too often occurred.

### Language and Thinking

The most used and most useful images in thinking are probably those associated with language symbols. In fact some psychologists regard language and thinking as identical.[3] Certainly the relationship is close as evidenced by the fact that both are directed at a goal or conclusion, both show signs of searching for related matters, and both involve some sort of integrative patterning. Certainly, too, psychologists not regarding language and thought as identical would agree that the act of thinking involves the manipulation of symbols and that the symbols known best are those of language.[4]

Basic research concerning the relationship of thought to speech has had the attention of such psychologists as Piaget, Buehler, Stern, Watson, and Vygotsky.[5] Though their viewpoints are different, their research has shown that speech and thinking are highly related. Their differences evolve around two distinct views of this relationship. One point of view says, as suggested above, that thinking consists of verbalization, that the thought and the words in which it is expressed are one and the same thing. The other says that thought takes shape independent of language and that language is merely the vehicle, the container of an already accomplished thought.[6] This difference is based largely upon differing theories. For our purposes the essential fact is the recognition of the relatedness of speech to thinking.

On a different level of experimentation there is evidence of this relationship substantiating the empirical and theoretical based views. This research deals largely with the thinking of those who have not heard language or are retarded in it. Vincent, for example, found differences between deaf and hearing childern under eight years of age in sorting tasks, with the deaf children more than a year retarded.[7] Brown and Mecham selected forty deaf children with a mean IQ of 107 and measured them on a verbal language development scale on which they had a mean language quotient of forty-nine.[8] The amount of hearing loss affected language scores significantly. Simmons made similar findings through analyzing differences between spoken and written language of

[2] John B. Carroll, "Language Development," *Encyclopedia of Educational Research* (Chester W. Harris, Ed.). New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960, pp. 744-752.

[3] David H. Russell, *Children's Thinking*. Boston: Ginn and Company, 1955, p. 24.

[4] J. B. Stroud, *Psychology in Education*. New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1945, pp. 172-188.

[5] See the recently translated book *Thought and Language* by L. S. Vygotsky. Cambridge: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1962, with an Introduction by Jerome S. Bruner and Comments by Jean Piaget.

[6] Joseph Church, *Language and the Discovery of Reality*. New York: Random House, 1961, pp. 147-158.

[7] Michele Vincent, "Les Classifications d'Objects et leur Formulation Verbale Chez l'Enfant," *Enfance*, 12 (1959), 190-204. Reported in Susan M. Ervin and Wick R. Miller, "Language Development," Chapter III of *Child Psychology*, The Sixty-second Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part I. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963.

[8] Jesse C. Brown, Jr. and Merlin Mecham, "The Assessment of Verbal Language Development in Deaf Children," *Volta Review*, May, 1961, pp. 228-230.

deaf and hearing children based on six pictures of four sequences each.[9]

### Handicaps and Language Ability

Any handicap—physical, mental, cultural, personality—is generally recognized as affecting language. Research has borne out this general observational conclusion in many of the handicap areas.

Williams and Little studied children with articulatory difficulties.[10] They found a moderate relationship between the length of sentences, grammatical completeness and complexity, and correctness of word usage to articulatory ability. Davis recorded the language of five-and-a-half year-old-children with faulty articulation and found that they used shorter sentences and showed smaller vocabularies than did normal children.[11] The differences were not significant for children a year older. This latter finding was substantiated by Yedinack, who tested seven-and-a-half year-old-children for articulatory ability, intelligence, length of verbal response, and the grammatical complexity and completeness of the verbalizations.[12] Yedinack found that articulatory errors and the measures of language ability were not significantly correlated. Perhaps these findings suggest the effects of school instruction upon language ability, though the decrease in the correlation of articulatory defects and language ability may be a developmental result.

The handicap of deafness, as shown in the previous section, affects language ability. Keys and Boulware found that there is little permanent advantage in language ability gained by children who hear but lose hearing before reaching school age when these children are compared with those who have never heard.[13]

In the area of blindness handicap, Maxfield found that blind children typically are seriously handicapped in language development but that blindness *per se* does not have a retarding effect and may actually stimulate language development under expert training conditions.[14]

### Environmental Influences upon Language Development

Research evidence strongly supports the viewpoint that the quality of a child's early language environment is the most important external factor affecting the rate of language development.[15] This early language environment is largely that of the family. Generally, language development is faster in children from upper socio-economic level homes.[16] A point to consider, though, is that the measures of verbal ability and the incentives provided by the school for talking and otherwise using language may not tap the verbal ability of the culturally "disadvantaged" or culturally different child.[17] A broadened view of what

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[9] Audrey Ann Simmons, "A Comparison of the Type-Token Ratio of Spoken and Written Language of Deaf and Hearing Children," *Volta Review*, September, 1962, pp. 417-421.

[10] H. McFarland Williams and M. F. Little, *Development of Language and Vocabulary in Young Children*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Study, 1937.

[11] D. Davis, "The Relation of Repetitions in the Speech of Young Children to Certain Measures of Language Maturity and Situational Factors," Part I, *Journal of Speech Disorders*, 4 (1939), pp. 303-318.

[12] Jeannette G. Yedinack, "A Study of the Linguistic Functioning of Children with Articulation and Reading Disabilites," *The Journal of Personality*, March, 1963, pp. 79-96.

[13] Noel Keys and Loise Boulware, "Language Acquisition by Deaf Children as Related to Hearing Loss and Age of Onset," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 29 (1938) 401-412.

[14] Kathryn E. Maxfield, *The Spoken Language of the Blind Preschool Child: A Study of Method*. Archives of Psychology, No. 201. Columbia University, 1936.

[15] Carroll, *op. cit.*, p. 749.

[16] Mildred C. Templin, *Certain Language Skills in Children*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1957, p. 147.

[17] James Olsen, "The Verbal Ability of the Culturally Different," *The Educational Forum*, March, 1965, pp. 280-284.

language is might prevent the too readily stereotyping of children from lower socio-economic homes as being deficient in language skills.

There are, however, factors associated with home and parents other than socio-economic status that bear upon language development. Many of these have been identified by McCarthy, who pointed out that language disorders are extremely complex and do not appear in isolation.[18] She further asserted that children with non-organic language disorders often have disturbed family relationships which cause emotional insecurity with varying accompanying symptoms of maladjustment. Particularly affecting the home atmosphere, then, are the personalities of the parents. For example, Kinstler reported that his study of thirty mothers of young stutterers matched with thirty mothers of nonstutterers showed the mothers of the stutterers covertly rejecting their children far more often but overtly far less than do the mothers of normal speakers.[19]

The study by Haggerty on the effects of hospital isolation is interesting and suggests that a teacher might simply "care for" a child in school without much greater attention to language and personality needs than might occur in a hospital.[20] Haggerty stated that early and prolonged hospitalization can damage personality integration and can lead to an inhibition of proper communicability. His data were gathered over a period of five years on one hundred seventh-grade children who had spent prolonged periods in hospitals and other related institutions.

Other environmental factors which may affect language development include oversolicitousness on the part of parents and other adults, excessive use of baby talk, unconscious attitudes of rejection, and other special group conditions, such as the only child, children with siblings, twins, orphaned children, and sex.[21] The single child develops language facility more rapidly than does the child with siblings; twins develop more slowly than other family groupings; orphan children have the same problems as the prolonged hospitalized children; and our child rearing practices appear to facilitate a slight advantage in language development in girls over that in boys. Most important of all other environmental factors retarding language development as far as schools are concerned would appear to be the failure to provide situations which stimulate talking.

### Speech and the Development of Personality

Ideas about what constitutes human personality and how personality is developed vary widely. Most often, however, personality is regarded as a persistent pattern of behavior, the possession of attributes and qualities which are unique to the individual.[22] Personality is generally considered to include those nonphysical characteristics which differentiate one human being from another.

Essentially, variations in views on how personality develops center upon organismic and behavioristic theories. One view argues the biological uniqueness of every human being.[23] The other view argues for

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[18] Dorothea McCarthy, "Language Disorders and Parent-Child Relationships," *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, December, 1954, pp. 514-523.
[19] Donald B. Kinstler, "Covert and Overt Maternal Rejection in Stuttering," *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, May, 1961, pp. 145-155.
[20] Arthur D. Haggerty, "The Effects of Long-Term Hospitalization or Institutionalization upon the Language Development of Children," *The Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 94 (1959) 305-209.
[21] Carroll, *op. cit.*, p. 749.
[22] Calvin S. Hall and Gardner Lindzey, *Theories of Personality*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1957.
[23] Roger J. Williams, *Biochemical Individuality: The Basis for the Genotrophic Concept*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1956.

the role of learning, playing down structure and relatively unchanging traits.[24]

While theories as the development of personality differ (and the statements above are oversimplified), most psychologists now avoid accepting a strictly "maturationist" account and focus their concern upon learning, the process of development of the total human organism, and the roles of intra- and interpersonal relationships.[25] Thus, since language affects learning and learning affects language, it follows that language affects personality and personality affects language. This, too, may be an oversimplification, since other than language influences bear upon personality and the basic aspects of language are learned seemingly without regard to personality differences. The concern to educators, however, is that language development and personality development are often related and this relatedness must be considered in teaching.

Barry's study is supportive of the personality-language relationship.[26] This study showed significant relationships between ratings of adjustment level and characteristics of the verbal reactions toward self and the world. The findings were based upon data from interviews of persons seeking and receiving counseling.

Sanford's earlier report pointed out that verbalizations reveal consistent and repeating patterns of behavior from day to day and that personality is reflected in the manner of speaking as well as in the content of the speech.[27] His description of the speech of two persons supports these statements in that this description could well be a description of the personalities of the individuals.

A number of studies have been made relative to speech handicaps and personality, with conflicting reports of findings. Beckey, for example, found that children retarded in speech cried easily, tended to play alone, and did not seek as much adult attention as did normal speakers.[28] On the other hand, he reported no significant differences between children with speech defects and normal children in the total number of behavior problems. Heltman, in his early review of research, indicated that research before 1938 found stutterers as a group normal with respect to fundamental personality characteristics as well as physical and mental characteristics.[29] Yet Glasner's study of stutterers under the age of five showed that fifty-four percent had feeding problems, twenty-seven percent were enuretic, and twenty percent had exaggerated fears or nightmares.[30] Anxiety was found to be common to most stutterers.

More recently Santostefano using the Rorschach found significantly more anxiety and hostility for stutterers than for nonstutterers as well as a decrement in performance under stress to the extent that personal adjustment was affected.[31]

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[24] John Dollard and Neal E. Miller, *Personality and Psychotherapy: An Analysis in Terms of Learning, Thinking, and Culture*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1950.

[25] Carson McGuire, "Personality," *The Encyclopedia of Educational Research* (Chester W. Harris, Ed.). New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960, pp. 946-957.

[26] John Barry, "The Relation of Verbal Reactions to Adjustment Level," *The Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 45 (1950) 647-658.

[27] F. H. Sanford, "Speech and Personality: A Comparative Case Study," *Character and Personality*, 10, (1942) 169-198.

[28] R. E. Beckey, "A Study of Certain Factors Related to Retardation of Speech," *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, 1942, pp. 233-249.

[29] H. G. Heltman, "Psycho-social Phenomena of Stuttering, and Etiological and Theorapeditic Implications," *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 1938, pp. 79-96.

[30] Phillip J. Glasner, "Personality Characteristics and Emotional Problems in Stutterers under the Age of Five," *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, 1949, pp. 135-138.

[31] Sebastian Santostefano, "Anxiety and Hostility in Stuttering," *Journal of Speech and Hearing Research*, December, 1960, pp. 337-347.

In the area of normal speech and dimensions of it related to personality a limited amount of investigation has been done. Scheidel, Crowell, and Shepherd, studying the relationships between personality traits and discussion behavior, found "notable relationships between such personal characteristics as self-confidence, independence, and dominance and the 'Individual Prominence' dimension of discussion behavior."[32] Utterback and Fotheringham, however, found only inconclusive relationships existing among discussion-group size, length of discussion, and degree of moderation.[33]

Snider contends that basic personality factors will be revealed through the use of language, citing the excessive use of such terms as *all, always, never, forever* as correlates of rigid, dogmatic behaviors of other kinds.[34] A degree of substantiation of this contention was reported by Honigfeld and others. These investigators found that the authoritarian oriented person showed a particular "style" in filling in blanks in a test situation.[35]

As to the relationship between listening and personality, Kelly reported that good listeners were more participating, more ready to try new things, and more emotionally stable and free from nervous symptoms.[36] These findings held only when the subjects were given "surprise" listening tests; when they knew they were to be tested the differences were not significant.

A major problem in determining the relationship of oral language ability to personality is that measures of personality are considered by many persons to be something less than reliable and valid, with specific measuring instruments related to particular theories of personality.[37] Equally true, of course, is the difficulty of determining just what is language ability.

Common sense tells us that personality problems may well arise as a result of problems with communication, problems with self-expression, problems with language. We also know persons who appear to be limited in language ability but who strike us as having "pleasing" personalities. Too, we sometimes sense that if a person did not have the personality he has he might better use language. These things do show a relationship between language and personality and, while research evidence substantiating a close relationship appears to be inconclusive, it does support the general conclusion.

### Approval and Vocalization

A number of studies have been made concerning the relationship between approval and verbalization. Many of these have been in interview situations, often of mentally retarded children, in which some form of approval from an adult—a word such as *good*, candy, a smile, *etc.*—prompted or reinforced a vocal response. For example, Barnett and others studied the vocal responses of two groups of mentally retarded children, the experimental group being reinforced by saying "good."[38] The results showed a general increment result-

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[32] Thomas M. Scheidel, Laura Crowell, and John R. Shepherd, "Personality and Discussion Behavior: A Study of Possible Relationships," *Speech Monographs*, November, 1958, pp. 261-267.

[33] William E. Utterback and Wallace C. Fotheringham, "Experimental Studies of Motivated Group Discussion," *Speech Monographs*, November, 1958, pp. 268-277.

[34] James G. Snider, "The Linguistic Content Variable in School Counseling," *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, February, 1964, pp. 577-580.

[35] G. Honigfeld, A. Platz, and R. D. Gillis, "Verbal Style and Personality: Authoritarianism," *Journal of Communication*, December, 1964, pp. 215-218.

[36] C. M. Kelly, "Mental Ability and Personality Factors in Listening," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, April, 1963, pp. 152-156.

[37] McGuire, *op. cit.*, pp. 954-955.

[38] C. D. Barnett, M. W. Pryer, and N. R. Ellis, "Experimental Manipulation of Verbal Behavior in Defectives," *Psychological Reports*, December, 1959, pp. 593-596.

ing from the reinforcement. Rowley and Stone found the same results in their study of forty-eight "normal" fourth-grade children.[39] Relatedly, Gross found that by saying "good" or by nodding he produced significantly more free responses to the Rorschach.[40]

Strong's review of verbal conditioning and counseling research showed that the counselors use of verbal reinforcers, such as "good," "mmmm," "um-hum," "I see," "that's accurate," *etc.*, increased the rate of emission of the reinforced response in some of the experimental conditions.[41]

Studies of adult effect upon vocalization have shown that the adult's action in a one-to-one situation is of major importance. Rheingold and others reported a study of the vocalizations of twenty-one normal infants responding to an expressionless adult and the same adult smiling, clucking, and touching the infants.[42] The results suggest that the social vocalizing of infants and, more generally, their social responsiveness may be modified by the responses adults make to them.

### Anxiety and Speech

There have been many studies of the relationships between anxiety and various variables, including vocalization and verbal and nonverbal learning. This research has faced investigative problems similar to those in personality research in that anxiety is defined differently by different investigators.[43] Some regard anxiety as a trait, thus a part of personality, while others regard it as a label given to a particular response or class of responses. The purpose here is not to attempt to define anxiety except in a general sense, but to point out that anxiety affects language and to indicate some language and language-related factors which apparently affect anxiety.

Of particular concern to teachers are the findings regarding anxiety and permissiveness and authoritarianism. Barnard and others studied the effects of test anxiety on the verbalizations made by third-grade children in evaluative and in permissive interview situations.[44] The findings were that high anxiety children in an evaluative interview situation express more negative affect than low anxiety children in the same situation, but this difference did not occur under the permissive conditions.[45] The opposite was true for the low anxiety children.

### Summary

While research evidence appears not to be available to support the viewpoint that language ability directly affects the personality and social development of every person, adequate substantiation of the interrelatedness of language ability, environmental and physical and interpersonal factors, personality, and several behavioral tendencies such as the expression of anxiety has been shown. The facts of this interrelatedness must be known and their effects reflected in the instruction of teachers and the planning of curriculum workers.

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[39] Vinton N. Rowley and F. Beth Stone, "Changes in Children's Verbal Behavior as a Function of Social Approval, Experimenter Differences, and Child Personality," *Child Development*, September, 1964, pp. 669-676.

[40] L. R. Gross, "Effects of Verbal and Nonverbal Reinforcement in the Rorschach," *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, January, 1959, pp. 66-68.

[41] Stanley R. Strong, "Verbal Conditioning and Counseling Research," *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, March, 1964, pp. 660-669.

[42] Harriet L. Rheingold, Jacob L. Gewirtz, and Helen W. Ross, "Social Conditioning of Vocalizations in the Infant," *Journal of Comparative and Physiological Psychology*, 52 (1959) 68-73.

[43] Britton K. Ruebush, "Anxiety," *Child Psychology*, Chapter XI.

[44] J. W. Barnard, P. G. Zimbardo, and S. B. Sarason, "Anxiety and Verbal Behavior in Children," *Child Development*, June, 1961, pp. 379-392.

[45] Philip Zimbardo, "The Measurement of Speech Disturbance in Anxious Children," *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, November, 1963, pp. 362-370.

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Robert B. Ruddell

# Oral Language and the Development of Other Language Skills

Understanding the contribution of oral language to the development of other basic communication skills is vital to the classroom teacher. Such an understanding should enable the teacher to utilize better the transfer potential present in the interrelatedness of all communication skills.

A major purpose of the language arts program in the elementary school is the development of each child's ability to utilize his skill in oral and written expression for effective communication. This communication can be considered to be of two major types: first, interpersonal communication (verbal interaction with others); and second, intrapersonal communication (verbal interaction with self). Research studies focusing on the interrelationships of language skills in achieving the communicative objective have been described; this report is an extension of past writing with emphasis upon oral language skills as related to the development of other language skills.[1]

## Vocabulary and Syntactical Language Development

The five to seven years of preschool experience has afforded most children opportunity for vigorous oral language interaction with environment and self. During these years the average child's vocabulary increases dramatically from a minute number of words used by the one year old to many hundreds of basic and derivative words recognized by the average first grader.[2] The grammatical development of children's language likewise increases at a rapid rate from one word utterances at the end of the first year to lexical class substitution by the second year.[3] The mastery of most basic grammatical fundamentals has occurred by the fourth year.[4] By the time the child enters the first grade, he has achieved a high degree of sophistication in his oral language development.[5]

[1] A. Sterl, Artley "Research Concerning Interrelationships among the Language Arts," *Elementary English*, 27 (December, 1950) 527-37.
Mildred A. Dawson, "Interrelationships Between Speech and Other Language Arts Areas," *Elementary English*, 31 (April, 1954) 223-233.
John J. DeBoer, "Composition, Handwriting, and Spelling," *Review of Educational Research*, 31 (April, 1961) 161-172.
Gertrude Hildreth, "Interrelationships among the Language Arts," *Elementary School Journal*, 48 (June, 1948) 538-549.

[2] Mary K. Smith, "Measurement of the Size of General English Vocabulary Through the Elementary Grades and High School," *Genetic Psychological Monographs*, 24 (1941) 311-345.

[3] Ruth Weir, *Language in the Crib*. The Hague: Mouton and Company, 1962.

[4] Susan M. Ervin and Wick R. Miller, *Language Development*. The Sixty-second Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part I. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963, pp. 108-143.

[5] Ruth G. Strickland, "The Language of Elementary School Children: Its Relationship to the Language of Reading Textbooks and the Quality of

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It must be recognized of course that these findings represent the language development of "average" children.[6,7] The very nature of inferential research requires that the researcher test major hypotheses by relying on significant differences derived from large sample averages, which may result in conclusions of a general nature. Thus the practitioner must be alert to the developmental ranges in language growth as related to factors in each child's language environment. For example, Bernstein's research with British youth points to middle and lower working class language differences.[8] The speech patterns of the middle-class children reflected greater individual variation and greater meaning clarity through the utilization of the available possibilities of sentence organization. This presented a marked contrast with patterns of lower working class children who were found to have a comparatively rigid and limited use of the organizational possibilities of sentence construction. Templin's findings also suggest that socioeconomic level is related to the grammatical complexity of responses and vocabulary development of children.[9]

The frequency of the child's opportunity to participate verbally with adults in the family and the language model available would appear to have a direct bearing on the rate of language development.[10] In families with a single child, the child's language facility was found to develop more rapidly than that of children with siblings, the latter children were found to develop language facility faster than twins only.

Thus oral language development of the individual child must be carefully assessed for present achievement and for future potential in light of related environmental factors. The following discussion will focus on research dealing with the relationship between the development of oral language skills (speech, listening) and written language skills (reading, writing), the interrelatedness of language skill development, and the implications from this research for the teaching of language skills.

## Oral Language Development and Reading Achievement

The relationship between oral language development and reading achievement is evidenced either directly or tangentially from a number of significant investigations.

Strickland's study of children's oral language development and reading achievement at the sixth-grade level revealed a significant relationship between the use of movables and elements of subordination in oral language and oral reading interpretation.[11] Children who ranked high on measures of comprehension in silent reading and listening were found to make greater use of movables and elements of subordination in their oral language than did children who ranked low on measures of these variables. This finding suggests that a child's ability to utilize subordination and movables in oral expression is closely related to his ability to comprehend written language.

The longitudinal study of children's language development by Loban revealed that children who were advanced in general language ability, as determined by vocabu-

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Reading of Selected Children," *Bulletin of the School of Education*, Indiana University, Bloomington, 38 (July, 1962).

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] Smith, *loc. cit.*

[8] Basil Bernstein, "Language and Social Class," *British Journal of Sociology*, 11 (1960) 271-276.

[9] Mildred C. Templin, *Certain Language Skills in Children: Their Development and Interrelationships*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1957.

[10] Edith A. Davis, *The Development of Linguistic Skill in Twins, Singletons with Siblings, and Only Children from Ages Five to Ten Years*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1937.

[11] Strickland, *loc. cit.*

lary scores at the kindergarten level and language ratings by teachers, were also advanced in reading ability.[12] The inverse was found for those low in general language ability. Language achievement differences between the high and low groups were found to increase from year to year with the low group using many more partial expressions or incomplete sentence patterns. Loban concluded that competence in spoken language appears to be a necessary base for competence in reading.

Further evidence of this relationship was supplied by Milner's investigation of the use of language in the home and reading achievement at the first-grade level.[13] She found that the high achieving readers came from an enriched verbal environment which, as contrasted with that of the low achieving readers, included having more books available and being read to more often by high-esteemed adults. The high-scoring children also engaged in conversations with their parents more often than the low-scoring children.

Gibbons used a "disarranged phase test" to study the relationship between third-grade children's ability to understand the structure of sentences and their reading achievement. She found a correlation of .89 between the ability to see the relationship between parts of a sentence and the ability to understand the sentence, when intelligence was partialled out. A correlation of .72 was found between the ability to see the relationship between parts of sentences and total reading achievement.[14]

The significant finding highlighted in both Strickland's and Loban's studies, emphasizing the relationship between children's demonstrated use of movables and subordination in oral language and their reading and listening achievement, has an interesting parallel in Thorndike's early descriptive study of mistakes in paragraph reading.[15] Thorndike concluded from his study of sixth-grade children that in "correct reading" each element of meaning must be given appropriate weight in comparison to other elements and that ideas presented must be examined and validated to make sure that they satisfy the mental set or purpose of reading. He further concluded that understanding a paragraph is dependent upon the reader's selection of the right elements and synthesizing them in the right relationships. These conclusions point to the importance of seeing relationships among contextual elements—the movables and various forms of subordination—to reading comprehension. Again it would seem to follow logically that the child who demonstrates control over movables and subordination in his oral language will better comprehend written or spoken language emphasizing these features than will the child who has little facility in using movables or in subordinating.

A reading program encompassing oral patterns of language structure, identified by the Strickland study, was developed at the first-grade level by Ruddell.[16] In the early stages of the program, meaning change in

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[12] Walter D. Loban, *The Language of Elementary School Children*. Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1963.

[13] Esther Milner, "A Study of the Relationship Between Reading Readiness in Grade One School Children and Patterns of Parent-Child Interaction," *Child Development*, 22 (June, 1951) 95-112.

[14] Helen D. Gibbons, "Reading and Sentence Elements," *Elementary English Review*, 18 (February, 1941) 42-46.

[15] E. L. Thorndike, "Reading and Reasoning, A Study of Mistakes in Paragraph Reading," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 8 (June, 1917) 323-332.

[16] Robert B. Ruddell, "The Effect of Four Programs of Reading Instruction with Varying Emphasis on the Regularity of Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondences and the Relationship of Language Structure to Meaning on Achievement in First Grade Reading: A First Progress Report," *Psycholinguistic Nature of the Reading Process*, Edited by Kenneth Goodman. Detroit: Wayne State University Press (In press).

oral and written language as conveyed by intonation patterns (pitch, stress, juncture) and punctuation was stressed. In a later phase of the program, emphasis was placed on the relationships which exist among words in sentences by developing meaning change through manipulation of specific elements in the sentence. The sentences used were developed in the context of a paragraph or story. Findings at midyear in this first-grade study showed significant differences in reading comprehension skills favoring the basal reading programs using the special supplement emphasizing language structure as related to meaning when contrasted with identical basal reading programs not using the special supplement. This study reported correlations of .68 and .44 between children's syntactical language development measured early in grade one and the respective factors of vocabulary achievement and comprehension achievement measured at midyear.

At the fourth-grade level the same researcher examined the effect on reading comprehension of patterns of language structure which occur with high and low frequency in children's oral language.[17] When the readability level of reading passages was controlled, comprehension scores on material written with high frequency patterns of language structure were found to be significantly superior to comprehension scores on passages written with low frequency patterns of language structure.

The research reviewed here strongly suggests that facility in oral expression, particularly vocabulary knowledge and an understanding of sentence structure, is basic to the development of reading comprehension skill.

[17] Robert B. Ruddell, "The Effect of the Similarity of Oral and Written Patterns of Language Structure on Reading Comprehension," *Elementary English*, 42 (April, 1965) 403-410.

### Listening Development and Reading Achievement

Kelty investigated the effect of training in listening for certain purposes upon the ability of fourth-grade pupils to read for the same purposes.[18] She found that practice in listening to note the details of a selection produced a significant gain in reading for the same purpose. However, training in listening to decide upon the main idea and to draw a conclusion produced a positive but not significant change in reading for these purposes.

The research by Hampleman indicated that the listening comprehension of fourth- and sixth-grade children was superior to their reading comprehension of easy material when compared to the comprehension of more difficult verbal context.[19] Listening comprehension was found to be significantly superior to reading comprehension for both fourth- and sixth-grade pupils, but an increase in mental age resulted in a decrease in the difference between listening and reading comprehension.

Young[20] found that children retained more from an oral presentation by the teacher than from silent reading by themselves. The oral presentation plus simultaneous silent reading by the pupils was equally as effective as the oral presentation of the teacher alone. Children who did poorly in comprehension through listening

[18] Annette P. Kelty, "An Experimental Study to Determine the Effect of Listening for Certain Purposes upon Achievement in Reading for These Purposes," *Abstracts of Field Studies for the Degree of Doctor of Education*. Greeley: Colorado State College of Education, 15 (1954) 82-95.

[19] Richard S. Hampleman, "Comparison of Listening and Reading Comprehension Ability of Fourth and Sixth Grade Pupils," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Indiana University, 1955.

[20] William E. Young, "The Relation of Reading Comprehension and Retention to Hearing Comprehension and Retention," *Journal of Experimental Education*, 5 (September, 1936) 30-39.

were also found to perform poorly in comprehension through reading. Young concluded that throughout the intermediate grades children improve their ability to comprehend through reading at the same rate that they improve their ability to comprehend through listening.

A number of correlational studies have examined the relationship between listening and reading comprehension. At the fifth-grade level Lundsteen reported a correlation of .52 between critical listening and reading achievement.[21] Plessas reported correlation coefficients between a listening test and various aspects of reading achievement ranging from .27 to .80.[22] Trivette found a correlation between listening and reading comprehension of .61 and Hollow found a correlation of .55, at the fifth-grade level.[23,24] From a study at the sixth-grade level, Pratt reported a correlation of .64, while Devine, at the high school level, found a correlation of .65.[25,26] High relationships between listening and reading comprehension were also reported in early studies by Larsen and Feder and by Young.[27,28]

The correlations from the majority of these studies suggest that factors in listening comprehension account for approximately twenty-five to sixty percent of the variance in the reading comprehension scores, depending on the types of listening and reading skills measured. It must be emphasized, however, that correlational studies are limited as to the clarity of relationships between variables. This is to say that a cause-and-effect relationship is not established through correlational analysis. The common, but imperfectly defined, variable of intelligence, for instance, may account for a significant portion of the relationship observed between listening comprehension and reading comprehension.

The research of Caffrey and the study by Spearritt suggest that ability in listening, or "auding," may be constituted of verbal comprehension factors differing from those involved in reading.[29,30] Russell has emphasized the need for a theory of listening which would enable researchers to generate fruitful hypotheses for examination and allow practitioners to apply findings in developing this phase of the language arts curriculum.[31]

In summary, the relationship between listening and reading is shown to be of significant magnitude, with common factors

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[21] Sara Lundsteen, "Teaching Abilities in Critical Listening in the Fifth and Sixth Grades," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, 1963.

[22] G. P. Plessas, "Reading Abilities and Intelligence Factors of Children Having High and Low Auding Ability," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, 1957.

[23] Sue E. Trivette, "The Effect of Training in Listening for Specific Purposes," *Journal of Educational Research*, 54 (March, 1961) 276-277.

[24] Sister M. K. Hollow, "Listening Comprehension at the Intermediate Grade Level," *Elementary School Journal*, 56 (December, 1955) 158-161.

[25] Edward Pratt, "Experimental Evaluation of a Program for the Improvement of Listening," *Elementary School Journal*, 58 (March, 1958) 315-320.

[26] Thomas G. Devine, "The Development and Evaluation of a Series of Recordings for Teaching Certain Critical Listening Abilities," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Boston University, 1961.

[27] Robert P. Larsen and Daniel D. Feder, "Common and Differential Factors in Reading and Hearing Comprehension," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 31 (April, 1940) 241-252.

[28] William E. Young, *loc cit.*

[29] J. G. Caffrey, "Auding Ability as a Function of Certain Psychometric Variables," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, 1953.

[30] Donald Spearritt, *Listening Comprehension—A Factoral Analysis*. Australian Council for Educational Research, Research Series No. 76. Melbourne: G. W. Green & Sons, Ltd., 1962.

[31] David H. Russell, "A Conspectus of Recent Research on Listening Abilities," *Elementary English*, 41 (March, 1964) 282-287.

accounting for a degree of the positive correlations; however, the evidence indicates that each receptive skill may contain verbal factors individually unique.

### Oral Language Development and Writing

The research evidence concerning the relationship between oral language and writing is comparatively limited. Loban reported from evidence obtained in his longitudinal study that children who were rated superior and above average in oral language usage were also rated above average in writing, and those below average in oral language were also below average in written language.[32]

Although specific data were not reported, Winter's findings of "low stable relationships" between oral language vocabularies and writing abilities of first- and second-grade children, substantiate Loban's research.[33]

Hughes also concluded from his investigation of 332 fifth-grade children that high achievement in any one of the language abilities examined (*e.g.*, language usage) tended to be associated with above average achievement in the other areas studied (*e.g.*, sentence sense, paragraph organization).[34] The inverse was true with low achievement in any one of the abilities. Correlations between language usage and the two factors of sentence sense and paragraph organization were found to be .46 and .39 respectively. The correlations reflected a positive relationship between each of the selected language variables independent of intelligence.

A detailed study by Harrell compared selected language variables in the speech and writing of 320 children of ages nine, eleven, thirteen, and fifteen. A short movie was used as the stimulus for securing the speech and writing samples.[35] The investigator found that the length of the compositions and clauses used in oral and written expression increased with age, with a larger percentage of subordinate clauses being used by the older children in both written and spoken composition. The children were found to use a larger percentage of subordinate clauses in writing than in speaking. More adverb and adjective clauses were used in written compositions while a larger number of noun clauses were used in speaking. A larger percentage of adverbial clauses, excepting those of time and cause, were used in the children's speech. The developmental increase of each language variable in relation to age was found to be greater for written compositions than for oral.

Working with tenth-grade students Bushnell compared each student's oral and written compositions on the same topic.[36] He found that higher scores on measures of thought content and sentence structure were obtained on the written themes than on the oral compositions. Correlations between the scores on oral and written thought content and oral and written sentence structure were found to be .42 and .35 respectively. Bushnell concluded that the most important difference between the two forms of expression was the more precise and logical organization of written

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[32] Walter Loban, *loc. cit.*

[33] Clotilda Winter, "Interrelationships among Language Variables in Children of the First and Second Grades," *Elementary English*, 34 (February, 1957) 108-113.

[34] Virgil Hughes, "Study of the Relationships among Selected Language Abilities," *Journal of Educational Research*, 47 (October, 1953) 97-106.

[35] Lester E. Harrell, Jr., "An Inter-Comparison of the Quality and Rate of the Development of Oral and Written Language in Children," *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 22, No. 3, 1957.

[36] Paul Bushnell, *An Analytical Contrast of Oral with Written English*. Contributions to Education, No. 451. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1930.

language in contrast to the less precise and loosely organized oral language.

By examining research which contrasts the language development of children possessing defective hearing with that of children having normal hearing, the relationship between oral language development and writing achievement is brought into sharper focus. Heider and Heider used a motion picture as a stimulus for securing written compositions from 301 deaf and 817 hearing children ranging in age from eleven to seventeen years and eight to fourteen years respectively.[37] Although the deaf children were three years older, their compositions were found to resemble the less mature hearing children. The deaf children were found to use fewer numbers of words and clauses than the hearing children. The hearing children used more compound and complex sentences with a larger number of verbs in coordinate and subordinate clauses, indicating a more advanced development in written language.

The written language of normal and defective hearing children was also examined by Templin.[38] Children having defective hearing were found to use more words in their explanations of natural phenomena than hearing children. This was interpreted as reflecting less adequate control over vocabulary, rather than representing a more complex type of expression. The children with defective hearing apparently needed more words to express a concept because of their inability to use precise vocabulary. Templin concluded that the written language of the defective hearing child is more immature than that of the hearing child of the same age, grade, and intelligence.

These investigations point to similarities in the growth patterns of oral and written language development. Achievement in oral language appears to be directly associated with written language achievement although some variance in the organizational quality of oral and written expression of older children is evidenced.

### Summary: Interrelationships of Language Skills

Research evidence available strongly suggests a high degree of interrelatedness among the various communication skills. The functional understanding of vocabulary and the ability to comprehend relationships between elements of vocabulary in structural patterns appear to encompass common communication components in the language arts.

The research reviewed indicates that oral language development serves as the underlying base for the development of reading and writing achievement. The child's ability to comprehend written material through reading and to express himself through written communication appears directly related to his maturity in the speaking and listening phases of language development.

The findings reported suggest that the receptive skills of listening and reading are closely related and utilize similar verbal factors but may encompass factors unique to each skill.

The relationship between the receptive skill of listening and the expressive skill of writing was explored in the research on normal and hearing handicapped children. Hearing children were found to use more complex types of language structure and more concise composition, reflecting a higher degree of maturity in written expression than that of deaf or partially hearing children.

The expressive skills of speaking and

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[37] F. K. Heider and Grace M. Heider, A "Comparison of Sentence Structure of Deaf and Hearing Children," *Psychological Monographs*, 52 (1940) 42-103.

[38] Mildred C. Templin, *The Development of Reasoning in Children with Normal and Defective Hearing*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1950.

writing appear to parallel closely each other in developmental growth. With older children, however, some variance is noted in the types of subordination and the degree of organization utilized in oral and written compositions.

Interrelationships among the language arts skills are very much apparent in the research examined. These interrelationships deserve careful consideration by the classroom teacher if full utilization is to be made of the learning transfer potential in language skills.

### Implications for Teaching the Language Skills

The research evidence presented in this discussion suggests a number of implications for teaching language skills. These include the following:

1. The teacher of basic language skills must be aware of the wide range in language development which can be anticipated in the elementary classroom. His understanding of individual children will be more complete, enabling the planning of a more adequate language program, if the possible factors which may have precipitated the range of individual language differences can be accounted for. These factors may include the language models presented in the home, the degree of language interaction between the parents and the child, the value placed by the home on the importance of language development, the dialect differences between home and school, and individual pupil characteristics such as hearing acuity loss and intellectual development.

2. Children's language is greatly influenced by the models presented in their environmental settings. Although the early home environment plays a major role in a child's language development, it would seem that the teacher's model and that of other children could also exert a positive influence on children's language development in the classroom setting. Such devices as the tape recorder should be considered for individual or group listening activities in presenting appropriate and contrasting language models to the children. Oral language enrichment activities such as role playing, storytelling, and group discussions of direct experiences, deserve strong emphasis, particularly with children from culturally disadvantaged backgrounds. In this manner a language base can be established for the development of reading and writing skills.

3. Consideration should be given to language difficulties impairing children's reading and listening comprehension and clarity of oral and written expression. Vocabulary enrichment and the development of functional utilization of movables and subordinating elements in improving sentence meaning may require special emphasis. Consideration should be given to the following types of structural meaning changes: word substitution (*e.g.*, Bill hit the *ball*. Bill hit the *girl*.); expansion of patterns (*e.g.*, Tim had a wagon. Tim had a wagon *yesterday*. Tim *my brother* had a wagon yesterday.); inversion of sentence elements (*e.g.*, Sam hit the ball. *The ball* hit Sam.); transformations of basic structural patterns (*e.g.*, Ann is in the house. *Is* Ann in the house?). By a careful appraisal of language skill development, the language arts program can be based on the children's specific needs.

4. Oral language development can provide a basis for written language skill development in the integrated language skills curriculum. Oral language activities such as reading literature to children, dramatic play and dialogue, combined with extensive use of experience charts, can serve to help children understand how intonation and punctuation may be used to convey mean-

ing in oral and written expression. Such activities also provide an excellent way to show children how descriptive language can be used in developing story characters and story settings, and how certain parts of sentences can be expanded to provide the listener or reader more precise information in an interesting way.

5. An increased awareness of the interrelatedness of listening comprehension and reading comprehension skills should be fostered in the classroom. Listening and reading activities should encompass a variety of purposes, ranging from direct recall to critical evaluation of material. In practice the development of these skills may evolve through the careful development of purposes for listening and reading. For example, news articles and advertisements found in the daily newspaper or on television may be used in fostering critical comprehension skills. Listening comprehension skills can be taught and would seem to enhance reading comprehension skills. This consideration in the instructional program is essential if children are to obtain maximum benefit from the language environment which surrounds them.

6. Careful consideration should be given to children's concept development in relation to their own experiences. The child must have a firm grasp of the concept he is attempting to express in oral or written form if his communication attempt is to be successful. The teacher should attempt to develop and expand concepts through concrete experiences in the classroom and field trips, and by showing children how words convey different meanings in a variety of oral and written sentence contexts.

7. Language educators must consider the implementation of two types of research in the further exploration of the nature of interrelationships among the language arts and in testing the hypotheses embodied in the procedures and materials of language programs. The first type of research is the action research study carried out in individual classroom settings. In practice, this means using procedures and materials with children and noting in a descriptive manner the success and difficulty experienced in improving language skills within the limitations of the classroom. The second type of research is the carefully controlled research study carried out in an experimental setting. This type of evaluation must be effected with groups of children taught by distinct and contrastingly different programs with provision for control of important variables such as intelligence and socioeconomic background.

Although past research on children's language development has explored only a small segment of the vast cognitive realm, the high degree of interrelatedness between oral and written language skill development is evident. Through cooperative efforts psychologists, linguists, and language educators have recently forged new tools providing for more precise descriptive analysis of children's language. The value of such analysis techniques has been demonstrated in the studies of Strickland and Loban and should facilitate the exploration of the future language researcher. These techniques, new hypotheses, and development of new curriculum materials all require added understanding of factors leading to the improvement of children's language achievement. These must be carefully studied in classroom settings if knowledge is to be furthered and methodology of language arts instruction is to be improved.

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# The Effects of Environment on Oral Language Development: I

Although most certainly heredity and environment are interacting forces affecting oral language habits and competencies, environment is here singled out for special consideration. The intent of this report is the reviewing of pertinent research relating to oral language and environment. The treatment of this topic is limited to the transmissive aspects of oral language, although it is realized that speaking and listening are interrelated acts. The central question is, "How does the social-cultural environment of the home and school influence the development of articulation, vocabulary, fluency, and other oral language abilities?"

## Part I: Home Environment

In examining the effects of home environment on oral language development at least six questions need to be considered: (1) How important is it for children to have a conventional parental relationship with at least one parent rearing them; will institutionalized children have as much success in developing mature oral language habits? (2) What effect do siblings have on oral language development? (3) What child-rearing practices and conditions are favorable or unfavorable to oral language growth? (4) What effect does socioeconomic class have on a child's opportunities for learning adequate language habits? (5) Are there home environment factors which encourage the oral language development of one sex more than the other? (6) To what degree are the oral language habits of parents and other people in the home influential in molding the oral language patterns of children?

### *Conventional versus Institutionalized Parenthood*

Brodbeck and Irwin compared ninety-four infants at an orphanage with 217 infants under normal parental care.[1] The infants were all under seven months of age. Time samplings indicated that the non-orphans uttered a greater frequency and variety of phonemes, leading to the conclusion that even in early infancy one can detect the detrimental effects of institutionalization on oral language development.

That these effects can be lasting is demonstrated by Goldfarb's study of adolescents reared in institutions during early childhood.[2] Despite later schooling

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[1] Arthur J. Brodbeck and Orvis C. Irwin, "The Speech Behavior of Infants Without Families," *Child Development*, 17 (September, 1946), 145-156.

[2] William Goldfarb, "The Effects of Early Institutional Care on Adolescent Personality," *Journal of Experimental Education*, 12 (December, 1943), 106-129.

and ordinary family and community life, they generally remained retarded in language and mental growth. Conceivably, then, a critical period for oral language growth exists which, if passed by without concommitant emotional and linguistic nurturement, generally results in permanent damage. That emotional nurturement may be somewhat the more important factor is demonstrated by Mason's study described later.[3]

Further substantiation of the effects of institutionalization is provided by Moore, who found that oral language development was slower for orphanage children than for non-orphans, and that vocabulary size and the number and variety of subjects spontaneously discussed were all smaller for the institutionalized children.[4]

McCarthy summarized other studies which show that the meagre quantity and quality of adult contacts provided for children in many orphanages lead to deficiencies in vocabulary, articulation, and fluency.[5]

*Sibling Relationships*

Since a good deal of adult contact at an early age appears to be vital to oral language development, it might be expected that *only* children would develop more rapidly in this respect than children with siblings. Higgenbotham found this to be the case in a study of kindergarten, first, and second grade children.[6] In recording the "share and tell" episodes of 108 private school children whose intelligence scores and socioeconomic ratings were all above average, she found that children without siblings gave longer talks, used longer sentences, spoke more slowly, were more easily heard, and had more correct articulation than children with siblings. Furthermore, she found, in general, an inverse relationship between the number of siblings and the quality of oral language. (The fact that only children spoke more slowly is readily understandable when one considers the low level of competition for "air-wave" control.)

Davis, in a study of children from five to ten years of age, found the same linguistic superiority of only children, along with finding children with siblings also more mature than twins.[7] This relative inferiority of twins was also demonstrated by Day's earlier investigation of the language development of 160 twins.[8] The superiority in language development of children with siblings increased between the ages of two and five but since no twins over five were studied, the question might arise as to whether the relative superiority of singletons continues. However, McCarthy reported that twins tend to catch up to singletons in later years.[9]

If young twins are generally inferior in oral language to singletons, holding other

[3]Marie K. Mason, "Learning to Speak After Six and One-Half Years of Silence," *Journal of Speech Disorders*, 7 (December, 1942), 295-304.

[4]Jean K. Moore, "Speech Content of Selected Groups of Orphanage and Non-Orphanage Preschool Children," *Journal of Experimental Education*, 16 (December, 1947), 122-133.

[5]Dorothea McCarthy, "Language Disorder and Parent-Child Relationships," *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, 19 (December, 1954), 514-523.

[6]Dorthy C. Higgenbotham, "A Study of the Speech of Kindergarten, First, and Second Grade Children in Audience Situations with Particular Attention to Maturation and Learning as Evidenced in Content, Form, and Delivery," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Northwestern University, 1961.

[7]Edith A. Davis, *The Development of Linguistic Skill in Twins, Singletons with Siblings, and Only Children from Age Five to Ten Years*. (Institute of Child Welfare Monograph Serial No. 14) Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1937, pp. 131-137.

[8]Ella J. Day, "The Development of Language in Twins: A Comparison of Twins and Single Children," *Child Development*, 3 (September, 1932), 179-199.

[9]Dorothea McCarthy, "Language Development in Children," *A Manual of Child Psychology* (Leonard Carmichael, Editor). New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1954, 492-630.

factors constant, one might expect triplets to be even more retarded. This was found to be true by Howard in a study of eighty-two triplets.[10] The reason for the retardation of twins and triplets is speculative but probably straightforward; twins and triplets meet each other's need for intercommunication so readily, the need for oral communication with adults is diminished.

Considering singletons, twins, and triplets as a group, it seems reasonable to generalize that oral language proficiency increases directly with the quantity of communication with adults. It should be pointed out, however, that not all research findings on this matter are consistent. Smith found that order of birth seemed to result in no significant differences with respect to vocabulary, length of sentence, fluency, and usage errors.[11] Relatedly, Wellman discovered no relationship between articulation skill and the number of older children in the family.[12]

On the other hand, further justification for considering the quantity of adult contacts as a major factor in oral language development is offered by Aserlind's and Milner's more recent studies.[13,14] Aserlind examined the verbal skills of children in families of very low socioeconomic status and found that, despite the consistently low status of the families, he was able to differentiate among children on the basis of language development, with those whose language skills were relatively mature tending to have fewer siblings. Milner selected from among 108 first graders twenty-one children who scored "high" on the language portion of an intelligence test and twenty-one who scored "low." She found that families of high scorers usually had breakfast together, and that children in these families had active conversations with adults at breakfast, before school, and at supper; they also received more affection from the adults. Families of low scorers, however, did not eat breakfast together, and the children in these families had no conversations with adults during breakfast, before school, or at supper. Furthermore, they seldom talked to siblings at breakfast or before school.

*Child Rearing Practices and Conditions*

That the quantity of adult contacts is probably a major factor in oral language development has been demonstrated; that the quality of adult contacts is also important is shown in several studies of children with non-organic speech defects or retardations.

For example, Moncur matched forty-eight stutterers and forty-eight non-stutterers between five and eight years of age on sex, age, school placement, and residential area.[15] By means of structured interviews with the mothers he found that, relative to the non-stutterers, the stutterers were perceived as aggressive and nervous children with definite speech problems. Mothers of stutterers more often reported harsh disciplinary measures such as cor-

[10] Ruth W. Howard, "The Language Development of a Group of Triplets," *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 69 (December, 1946), 181-188.

[11] Madorah E. Smith, "A Study of Some Factors Influencing the Development of the Sentence in Preschool Children," *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 46 (March, 1935), 182-212.

[12] Beth L. Wellman, *et al.*, *Speech Sounds of Young Children*, University of Iowa Studies in Child Welfare, 5, No. 2. Iowa City: University of Iowa, 1931.

[13] LeRoy Aserlind, Jr., "An Investigation of Maternal Factors Related to the Acquisition of Verbal Skills of Infants in a Culturally Disadvantaged Population," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1963.

[14] Esther Milner, "A Study of the Relationships Between Reading Readiness in Grade One School Children and Patterns of Parent-Child Interaction," *Child Development*, 22 (June, 1951), 95-112.

[15] John P. Moncur, "Environmental Factors Differentiating Stuttering Children from Non-Stuttering Children," *Speech Monographs*, 18 (November, 1951), 312-325.

poral punishment, threats or humiliation. Their discipline was less consistent, and they were more often guilty of nagging and over-supervision. Furthermore, the parents more often disagreed on disciplinary matters. Mothers of stuttering children were frequently inconsistent in their eating and sleeping requirements. They reported more often than did mothers of non-stuttering children that they had supplied a word to the child, had told him to stop and start over, had called his attention to his speech, had scolded him for his speech, and had told him to think before he spoke. Moncur suggested that the parents' attitudes and behavior contributed to the onset of stuttering, since the stuttering commenced after the parents had had ample time to establish discipline patterns.

Kinstler matched thirty mothers of stuttering boys with thirty mothers of non-stuttering boys on age, education, size of family, age of children, socioeconomic status, religion, psychological guidance, and education of spouses.[16] The mothers were administered a projective-type, self-inventory questionnaire. Kinstler found that mothers of stuttering boys tended to (a) reject in a covert fashion far more often and in an overt fashion far less often than mothers of non-stuttering boys; (b) accept in a covert fashion less often and in an overt fashion slightly less often; and (c) reject more often than they accepted, whereas mothers of non-stuttering boys tended to accept more often than reject.

Moll and Darley detected a tendency for mothers of speech retarded children to provide less encouragement for their children to talk.[17] They also found that mothers of articulatory impaired children had "higher standards" and were more critical of their children's behavior.

Johnson compared a group of preschool stutterers with a group of non-stutterers equated for age, sex, and intelligence.[18] He discovered that parents often placed themselves in a semantic trap by labeling a child as a "stutterer" and then reacting to that label. Thus the stuttering would be unconsciously encouraged.

FitzSimons studied seventy normal speaking children and seventy children with articulatory problems, the groups selected from a population of 1,500 first graders and matched for sex, IQ, age, and school locale.[19] From interview data she determined that the children having articulation problems were toilet trained at an earlier age, bottle fed more often, and weaned earlier. They also experienced more abnormal birth conditions and more childhood diseases during their first three years of life. Furthermore, protocols of a projective test indicated that they perceived parental figures as authoritarian more often.

At a different level, Duncan administered a questionnaire to sixty-two stutterers and sixty-two non-stutterers from the same college.[20] The two groups were equated for IQ, sex, and socioeconomic status. Findings showed that the stutterers more often felt their parents did not understand them (56 percent versus 24 percent), felt a lack of affection in their home experience (23 percent versus 2 percent),

[16] Donald B. Kinstler, "Covert and Overt Maternal Rejection in Stuttering," *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, 26 (May, 1961), 145-155.

[17] Kenneth L. Moll and Frederic L. Darley, "Attitudes of Mothers of Articulatory-Impaired and Speech-Retarded Children," *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, 25 (November, 1960), 377-384.

[18] Wendell Johnson, *et al.*, "A Study of the Onset and Development of Stuttering," *Journal of Speech Disorders*, 7 (September, 1942), 251-257.

[19] Ruth FitzSimons, "Developmental, Psychosocial, and Educational Factors in Children with Non-organic Articulation Problems," *Child Development*, 29 (December, 1958), 481-489.

[20] Melba H. Duncan, "Home Adjustment of Stutterers versus Non-Stutterers," *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, 14 (September, 1949), 255-259.

and more frequently had desired to run away from home (34 percent versus 6 percent). They also more often perceived that their parents were presently disappointed in them (47 percent versus 23 percent) and more frequently considered one or both parents to be very nervous (no percent given).

Becky, in a clinical study of fifty children with delayed speech and fifty normal children equated for age, found that the delayed children had less contact with adults. She also found that the parents of the delayed more often anticipated the wants of their child before they were verbalized by him.[21]

Wood discovered that the mothers of fifty articulatory defectives tended to score higher on neuroticism and lower on self-adjustment than women in the norm group for the test.[22] The fathers as a group did not differ significantly from the norm group on neuroticism, but they did score lower on self-adjustment. The mothers also tended to have higher social standards than women in the norm groups. Wood found that ninety-six percent of the children with articulation problems had one or both parents who ranked below the forty-fifth percentile on the self-adjustment scale.

It is reasonably evident, then, that stuttering, retardation, and articulatory defects, when not physiologically caused, are related to a mentally unhealthy home environment. Children free of such defects tend to come from homes in which parents have positive feelings toward themselves, accept their children and display affection toward them, maintain consistent but mild discipline, avoid setting impossible standards for children, and provide ample opportunities for them to speak without being under tension.

In considering the effects of parental behavior on oral language development the modern child's third parent, namely, the television set, must not be ignored. What influence does this "parent" have on oral language growth? Unfortunately, research dealing with this question apparently has not been done, although television viewing habits have been intensively studied, particularly by Witty in the Chicago area. Children in this area tend to watch television about twenty hours per week, with the viewing time varying considerably among children and between grade levels. Sixth graders tend to stare at the box more than second graders; and high school students less than elementary school students. However, Witty has found no evidence that television viewing, *per se*, either hinders or enhances school achievement.[23] In a random sample of about 2,500 seventh- and eighth-grade students in California, Ridder found no significant relationship between academic achievement and the amount of television viewing.[24] Until further research of a more specific nature had been done, it is doubtful that valid generalizations can be made concerning the relationship between television viewing and oral language development.

Whether or not a child watches television, it has been shown that a child's environment may be barren with respect to the quantity and quality of contacts with adults in person and this barrenness has a detrimental effect on oral language growth. But there is another type of barren-

[21] Becky, Ruth E., "A Study of Certain Factors Related to Retardation of Speech," *Journal of Speech Disorders*, (September, 1942), 223-249.

[22] Kenneth S. Wood, "Parental Maladjustment and Functional Articulatory Defects in Children," *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, 11 (December, 1946), 255-275.

[23] Paul Witty, "Some Results of Twelve Yearly Studies of Televiewing," *Science Education*, 46 (April, 1962), 222-229.

[24] Joyce M. Ridder, "Pupil Opinions and the Relationship of Television Viewing to Academic Achievement," *Journal of Educational Research*, 57 (December, 1963), 204-206.

ness which must also create deficiencies in oral language development—cultural deprivation. Cultural deprivation is a condition which the American public has finally caught up with. Riessman estimates that by 1970 fifty percent of the public school pupils in large cities will be "culturally deprived."[25] Indeed, this may already be true in some of our eastern cities. That Negroes have been hit harder than "whites" by cultural deprivation is no secret. Deutsch found that sixty-five percent of the Negro children sampled in a large eastern city had never been more than twenty-five blocks from home; fifty percent reported that they had no pen or pencil at home; and the majority of homes had no books.[26] Many of the children could not follow simple oral directions because their major exposure to spoken language consisted of terse commands. It seems doubtful that oral language proficiency can be adequately developed under such conditions. The fact that something can be done to overcome cultural deprivation has been demonstrated and will be reviewed in Part II.

*Socioeconomic Status*

It is axiomatic that cultural deprivation is more likely to occur among families of low socioeconomic status. As shown by Eels, *et al*, Coleman, and Havighurst and Janke, this cultural deprivation results in a level of cognitive ability which is usually lower for children from low status families than for children from high status families.[27] It should also be expected that children from low status families will demonstrate a lower level of oral language proficiency than children from high status families. Research generally supports this expectation.

In some studies the vocabulary development of high status and low status children has been compared. Templin, in a study of 480 children between the ages of three and eight, discovered that the oral vocabulary of high status children was definitely superior to that of low status children.[28] Research that relates achievement and socioeconomic class supports the findings of those who have investigated oral vocabulary. Gough, for example, found that the high status sixth graders had higher vocabulary scores than low status pupils, and Hill and Giammateo computed a correlation of .84 between vocabulary and socioeconomic rating.[29]

In other studies the structural components of oral language used by high status and low status children have been compared. Barnes studied the oral language of 100 second graders, selected randomly from the total second-grade population in a large mid-western school district and found that the use of multiple verbs was

[25] Frank Riessman, *The Culturally Deprived Child*. New York: Harper and Bros., 1962.

[26] Martin Deutsch, *Minority Group and Class Status As Related to Social and Personality Factors in Scholastic Achievement*, Monograph No. 2. Ithaca, New York: Society for Applied Anthropology, 1960.

[27] Kenneth Eels, Allison Davis, R. J. Havighurst, Virgil E. Herrick, and Ralph Tyler, *Intelligence and Cultural Differences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951.
Hubert A. Coleman, "The Relationship of Socio-Economic Status to the Performance of Junior High School Students," *Journal of Experimental Education*, 9 (September, 1940), 61-63.
Robert Havighurst and L. L. Janke, "Relations Between Ability and Social Status in a Midwestern Community, I: Ten-Year-Old Children," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 35 (September, 1944), 357-368.

[28] Mildred C. Templin, *Certain Language Skills in Children: Their Development and Interrelationships*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1957.

[29] Harrison G. Gough, "The Relationship of Socio-Economic Status to Personality Inventory and Achievement Test Scores," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 37 (December, 1946), 527-540.
Edwin H. Hill and Michael C. Giammatteo, "Social Economic Status and Its Relationship to School Achievement in the Elementary School," *Elementary English*, 40 (March, 1963), 265-270.

higher for high status children.[30] Templin noted that high status children tended to use advanced sentence structures more frequently.[31] Loban, in his investigation of 338 children between kindergarten and sixth grade, found that high status pupils generally used more complex grammatical structures.[32] Francis discovered a positive relationship between socioeconomic status and the ability to use moveables and subordination elements, in her study of first graders.[33] McCarthy found that children from high status families used longer sentences and more mature sentence forms at earlier ages.[34] Deutsch's study of first- and fifth-grade children from low status families indicated that these children had more expressive language ability than generally emerged in the classroom, but that the syntactical organization of their language was quite deficient.[35]

Studies of the articulation abilities of high and low status children have also been made. However, the findings are inconsistent on this aspect of oral language growth. Mahon, Hall, and Healey all found no significant relationship between articulation abilities and socioeconomic status.[36] Templin, on the other hand, found that low status children were consistently lower on articulation scores. Furthermore, she found that they took about one year longer to achieve adult articulation (eight years of age as contrasted to seven years of age for the high status children).[37] Weaver, *et. al*, administered an articulation test to 594 first graders before they had been given reading instruction and found the mean number of errors for children of professional parents was 7.6; of clerical, skilled trades and retail business, 9.6; and of day laborers, 13.1.[38]

Research by Smith lends support to the well known fact that low status children make more usage "errors" than high status children.[39] This is easily explained by the fact that "standard" usage generally refers to the dialect of high status people. Furthermore, Noell has shown that children tend to make the same usage errors as their parents.[40] Since the dialect of low

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[30] Margaret D. Barnes, "An Analysis of the Oral Language of Second Grade Children with Emphasis upon Patterns of Sentence Structure and Verbs, and Their Relationship to Factors of Reading Age, Mental Age, Sex, and Socio-Economic Status," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Indiana University, 1962.

[31] Mildred C. Templin, *loc. cit.*

[32] Walter D. Loban, *The Language of Elementary School Children*, Research Report No. 1. Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1963.

[33] Sarah E. Francis, "An Investigation of the Oral Language of First Grade Children," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Indiana University, 1962.

[34] Dorothea McCarthy, *The Language Development of the Pre-School Child*. Institute for Child Welfare Monograph Series, No. 4. University of Minnesota, 1930.

[35] Martin Deutsch, "The Disadvantaged Child and the Learning Process," *Education in Depressed Areas*. A. Harry Passow (Editor). New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1963.

[36] Florence L. Mahon, "The Relationships of Certain Psychological Factors to Speech Development in Primary Grade Children," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Boston University School of Education, 1962.
William F. Hall, "A Study of the Articulatory Skills of Children from Three to Six Years of Age," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Missouri, 1962.
William C. Healey, "A Study of the Articulatory Skills of Children from Six to Nine Years of Age," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Missouri, 1963.

[37] Mildred C. Templin, *Loc. cit.*

[38] Carl H. Weaver, Catherine Furbee, and Rodney W. Everhart, "Paternal Occupational Class and Articulatory Defects in Children," *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, 25 (May, 1960), 171-175.

[39] Madorah E. Smith, "A Study of Some Factors Influencing the Development of the Sentence in Preschool Children," *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 46 (March, 1935), 182-212.

[40] Doris I. Noell, "A Comparative Study of the Relationship Between the Quality of the Child's Language Usage and the Quality and Types of Languages Used in the Home," *Journal of Educational Research*, 47 (November, 1953), 161-167.

status people precludes the possibility of errorless usage, it is hardly surprising that children of low status parents do not shine in this respect.

As Negroes are often handicapped by cultural deprivation, based on both class and racial discrimination, one might expect to find even greater oral language deficiencies among Negro children in low status environments than among white children in the same type of environment. Thomas selected randomly fifty Negro kindergarten children from one economically depressed urban area and fifty white kindergarten children from a similar area.[41] Interviews with the children demonstrated that all of the children showed deficiencies in amount, maturity, and quality of oral expression, and the Negro children were somewhat more deficient than the white children.

*Sex Differences*

It seems likely that there are environmental conditions which are biased toward not only high status children but female children as well. The differences reported between boys and girls are often small and insignificant, but when IQ, socioeconomic status, and stimulus are held constant, they are consistently in favor of the girls. Winitz, for example, attempted to control IQ, socioeconomic class, and family constellation with a population of 150 kindergartners evenly divided by sex.[42] He found a difference favoring girls (at the 10 percent level of confidence) on length of response, number of different words uttered, and structural complexity. From studies reported above, Barnes and Templin reported that girls tend to use longer sentences, McCarthy noted that girls develop language competence faster than boys, but neither Hall, Mahon, Healey, nor Templin found a significant relationship between sex and articulatory ability, although a slight tendency for girls to excel in this respect was consistently found.

With respect to speech defects, the difference between the sexes is highly significant. Many more boys than girls are victims of stuttering and articulatory disorders in our society. Yedinack, for example, found that 75 percent of those suffering from non-organic articulatory defects were boys.[43] Her population consisted of second graders selected from forty-three schools in ten cities. In Moncur's investigation of stuttering, 83 percent of the stutterers were boys.[44] In explaining such research findings, McCarthy suggested that a boy receives much less satisfaction from imitating the speech habits of his mother, who is around much more than the father; consequently he imitates less than girls do.[45] Also, noisy, energetic boys are sent out to play more often and thus are given less linguistic practice with an adult; boys also tend to receive more rejection.

*Parental Language Habits*

As has been reported, Noell found that the usage of parents largely determines the usage of their children.[46] The research

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[41] Dominic R. Thomas, "Oral Language Sentence Structure and Vocabulary of Kindergarten Children Living in Low Socio-Economic Urban Areas," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Wayne State University, 1962.

[42] Harris Winitz, "Language Skills of Male and Female Kindergarten Children," *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, 2 (December, 1959), 377-385.

[43] Jeanette G. Yedinack, "A Study of Linguistic Functioning of Children with Articulation and Reading Difficulties," *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 74 (March, 1949), 23-59.

[44] John P. Moncur, *Loc. cit.*

[45] Dorothea McCarthy, "Some Possible Explanations of Sex Differences in Language Development and Disorders," *Journal of Psychology*, 35 (January, 1953) 155-160.

[46] Doris I. Noell, *Loc. cit.*

by Templin showed that many other aspects of oral language are, to a large degree, habitual by the time a child enters first grade.[47] She found, for instance, that there was little change after the age of three in the parts of speech used and that the greatest growth in articulation took place between the ages of three and four.

Most children readily learn the oral language patterns of the home. But what of children who are expected to learn two languages? Are they able to assimilate them both as rapidly as other children assimilate one language? Carrow compared a group of third-grade bilinguals with a group of monolinguals, equated for IQ, socioeconomic status, age, sex, and hearing proficiency.[48] The bilinguals had been exposed to English and Spanish from infancy, could communicate in both by the age of three, and preferred English by the time of testing. The monolinguals had been exposed only to English. Results of testing showed significant differences favoring monolinguals on oral reading accuracy, oral reading comprehension, hearing vocabulary, speaking vocabulary, and articulation. Similarly, Smith reported that of ninety-two preschoolers, thirty of whom had been exposed both to Chinese and English in the home, the average vocabulary in either language of the bilinguals was far below the average vocabulary of the English monolinguals.[49] Many of the bilinguals had combined vocabularies which did not equal that of the average monolingual. Arsenian, after examining nearly 100 studies, concluded that monoglots tend to be superior to bilinguals on verbal intelligence, vocabulary, and school achievement; but the discrepancy between monoglots and bilinguals tends to decrease with combined age and education.[50] Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that a bilingual child tends to have a language handicap during the elementary school years.

*Part II of this article appears on the following page.*

[47] Mildred C. Templin, *Loc cit.*

[48] Sister Mary Arthur Carrow, "Linguistic Functioning of Bilingual and Monolingual Children," *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, 22 (September, 1957), 371-380.

[49] Madorah E. Smith, *Loc cit.* (1949)

[50] Seth Arsenian, "Bilingualism in the Post War World," *Psychological Bulletin*, 42 (February, 1945), 65-86.

Frank B. May

# The Effects of Environment on Oral Language Development: II

**Part II: School Environment**

In examining the effects of school environment on oral language development at least four questions need to be considered: (1) What influence do the speaking habits and leadership patterns of teachers have on oral language growth? (2) To what degree are the oral language habits of children a function of their school peers? (3) Does the administrative organization of a school have any effect on oral language development? (4) What curricular and instructional practices are conducive to oral language growth?

*Teacher Behavior*

The effect of teachers' speaking habits on children's oral language habits must be highly speculative because of the paucity of research on this question. Although Gesell found that young children tend to imitate a teacher's speech mannerisms, it remains to be seen the extent to which children learn basic oral language patterns merely from listening to the teacher's normal speech.[1] This must be particularly true if the teacher does most of the talking and the children have little practice in oral communication. Bellack, in a study of fifteen high school classes in "Problems of a Democracy," found that the teachers spoke an average of seventy-two percent of the lines.[2] (The range of speaking for the teachers was from sixty percent to ninety-three percent.) Such a verbal barrage hardly gives students much time to practice oral language skills, especially if the remaining twenty-eight percent is divided among twenty-eight pupils. It will be shown later, however, that teachers who carry on systematic instruction in oral language can effect changes.

Although teachers' speaking habits may only be mildly influential, their leadership patterns may have a much greater impact on oral language growth. Christensen discovered that vocabulary growth was significantly greater under teachers whose pupils rated them high on a "Warmth Scale."[3] Lippitt and White, in their classic boys club study, found that democratic leadership by the teacher encouraged friendly

Part II was first published in the November 1966 *Elementary English*, pages 720-729.

[1] Arnold Gesell and Frances L. Ilg., *The Child from Five to Ten*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946.
[2] Arno A. Bellack and Joel R. Davitz, *The Language of the Classroom*. Cooperative Research Project No. 1497, Institute of Psychological Research, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1963.
[3] C. M. Christensen, "Relationships Between Pupil Achievement, Pupil Affect-Need, Teacher Warmth, and Teacher Permissiveness," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 51 (June, 1960), 169-174.

discussions of personal matters, joking, asking opinions of each other, and making suggestions on group policy.[4] The authoritarian pattern of leadership resulted in either apathetic withdrawal (which would hinder oral language practice) or aggressive resistance (which would channel oral language into narrow destructive uses). Similarly, Ryans found that teachers who were understanding and friendly, yet organized and stimulating (similar to Lippitt and White's "democratic" pattern of leadership), encouraged productive and confident participation.[5] Other studies further demonstrate the positive effects of supportive teachers on the self-confidence of students and their willingness to participate.[6] It is apparent, then, that certain types of leadership on the part of teachers encourage more practice in oral communication. Whether such practice leads to greater facility with oral language can only be speculative without specific research on this question.

*School Peers*

Of course, the teacher is not the only influential person in the classroom. In general the older a school child is the more influential his peers become and the less influential his teachers and parents become. McCarthy suggests that little improvement in articulation can be hoped for if an adolescent's peers misarticulate; the peer influence is generally too strong for training by adults to have much lasting influence.[7] Goldberg pointed out that Puerto Rican children in large cities often speak Spanish instead of English in order to avoid being taken as Negroes by their school peers.[8]

Wilson's study shows the peer influence further, suggesting that even socioeconomic status may be less important than standards set by peer groups.[9] In this study reading achievement of white collar workers' sons was higher in a school attended predominantly by children of high status families than was the reading achievement of comparable white collar workers' sons in a school attended predominantely by children of low status families. In a second study Wilson found that ninety-three percent of the sons of professional men in predominantly upper class schools reported that they wanted to go to college, while only sixty-four percent of the professional men's sons in lower class schools wanted to go to college.[10] Obviously peer values have a strong influence on aspirations. It is likely that oral language will be affected by school peer values as much as any other area of development.

*Administrative Organization*

The effects of administrative organization

[4] Ronald Lippitt and Ralph K. White, "An Experimental Study of Leadership and Group Life," in *Readings in Social Psychology* (Edited by Eleanor E. Maccoby, *et al.*). New York: Henry Holt, 1958.

[5] David G. Ryans, "Some Relationships Between Pupil Behavior and Certain Teacher Characteristics," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 52 (April, 1961), 82-90.

[6] Harold H. Anderson and J. E. Brewer, *Studies of Teachers' Classroom Personalities, II: Effect of Teachers' Dominative and Integrative Contracts on Children's Classroom Behavior*. Stanford, California: Stanford University, 1946.

[7] Dorothea McCarthy, "Language Disorder and Parent-Child Relationships," *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, 19 (December, 1954), 514-523.

[8] Miriam Goldberg, "Factors Affecting Educational Attainment in Depressed Urban Areas," *Education in Depressed Areas*, A. Harry Passow (Editor). New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1963.

[9] Alan B. Wilson, "Social Stratification and Academic Achievement," in *Education in Depressed Areas*, A. Harry Passow (Editor). New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1963.

[10] Alan B. Wilson, "Residential Segregation of Social Classes and Aspirations of High School Boys," *American Sociological Review*, 24 (December, 1959), 836-845.

on student growth is generally difficult to ascertain because many non-organizational elements in a study are frequently not controlled. Nevertheless, some studies have been made of organizational practices such as ability grouping, multi-age grouping, non-grading, and team teaching.

Drews studied the effects of ability grouping of ninth grade English classes in four junior high schools.[11] The teacher personality variable was somewhat controlled by having each teacher teach one heterogeneous group and one or more homogeneous groups, permitting a focus upon the organization used. Drews found that language gains on tests were no greater for the homogeneously grouped students, although *oral* language growth was not specifically measured. However, teachers did report that "slow" students in homogeneous groups participated more actively than the slow students in heterogeneous groups, thus suggesting the possibility of greater oral language growth taking place. Possibly suggesting an influence upon oral language development, Torrance found that "high-creatives" who were temporarily grouped together for problem-solving sessions produced more ideas than those who were grouped with less creative children.[12] And not surprisingly, Mayans discovered that migrant children who were grouped with regular pupils learned more English than those who were segregated for purposes of special instruction in English.[13]

Research on multi-age grouping has resulted in inconclusive and inconsistent findings. Foshay found that the academic achievement of those who were grouped with children of various ages was not as high as those who were grouped in the usual way with children of the same age.[14] On the other hand, Chace and Rehwoldt and Hamilton reported that multi-age grouping resulted in slightly higher achievement.[15] Oral language achievement was not specifically measured by these investigators.

Research on non-grading suffers from the lack of delineation of specific instructional factors and specific achievement results. Carbone compared 122 intermediate-grade pupils who had attended non-graded primaries with 122 pupils who had attended graded primaries.[16] Achievement test results showed that graded pupils scored significantly higher on language tests and all other tests. However, further investigation showed that non-grading had not resulted in any major instructional changes, suggesting that teachers of non-graded groups were teaching as they always had taught, but less effectively.

No research has been reported on the influence of team teaching upon oral language growth. Heathers noted that the usual studies demonstrate that scores on

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[11] Elizabeth M. Drews, *The Effectiveness of Homogeneous and Heterogeneous Ability Grouping in Ninth-Grade English Classes with Slow, Average, and Superior Students*. U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, Cooperative Research Program, Project No. 608. Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1959.

[12] E. Paul Torrance, *Guiding Creative Talent*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1962.

[13] Frank Mayans, Jr., "Puerto Rican Migrant Pupils in New York City Schools: A Comparison of the Effects of Two Methods of Instructional Grouping on English Mastery and Attitudes," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1953.

[14] Arthur W. Foshay, "Interage Grouping in the Elementary School," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1948.

[15] E. Stanley Chace, "An Analysis of Some Effects of Multiple-Grade Grouping in an Elementary School," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Tennessee, 1961.
Walter Rehwoldt, and Warren W. Hamilton, "An Analysis of Some of the Effects of Interage and Intergrade Grouping in an Elementary School," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California, 1956.

[16] Robert F. Carbone, "A Comparison of Graded and Non-graded Elementary Schools," *Elementary School Journal*, 62 (November, 1961), 82-88.

standardized achievement tests are about the same under team teaching and self-contained-classroom teaching.[17] Anderson in his recent review of pertinent literature found no valid scientific study of the effectiveness of team teaching.[18]

Goodlad's survey of research indicates that class size is unrelated to achievement, though this is difficult for most teachers to accept. It is true that often such studies are lacking in controls of the type and quality of teaching done under different circumstances and, supporting the contrary view, Schellenberg[19] found that students who were placed in academic discussion groups of four experienced greater freedom of expression than those who were placed in groups of six, eight, or ten. It may be, then, that certain oral language skills will improve more rapidly in very small groups. This has also been suggested from the study by Ware, who reported successful use of "Rooms of Twenty" for disadvantaged children whose language abilities made them ill-prepared for the usual intermediate grade program.[20] In this program the children were given one or two semesters of intensive language training and consistently made "twice normal progress as measured by standardized tests." No comparisons were made with control groups and more than normal gains might be attributed to other factors than group organization or size.

*Curriculum and Instruction*

While the administrative organization of a school may have some influence on the opportunities a child has for oral language development, research indicates that curricular and instructional practices may be considerably more influential. It has often been remarked that specific oral language instruction is frequently slighted in the schools, with a far greater proportion of time devoted to other language areas, particularly reading. Yet, there are several studies which show the importance of oral language development *before* reading instruction begins.[21] There is also substantial opinion that a continuing emphasis upon oral language development is necessary for progress in reading achievement.

The principle of oral language competence prior to or concomittant with reading instruction is being utilized by several programs for culturally deprived children, as described by the Research Council of the Great Cities Program for School Improvement.[22] Deutsch, drawing implications from the data gathered at the Institute for Developmental Studies at the New York Medical College, reminded us of a second principle—that perceptual experiences should precede language training.[23] He suggested that schools may impede language growth of culturally deprived children by "pushing" language skills and

[17] Glen Heathers, "Research on Implementing and Evaluating Cooperative Teaching," *National Elementary Principal*, 44 (January, 1965), 27-33.

[18] Robert H. Anderson, "Organizational Character of Education: Staff Utilization and Deployment," *Review of Educational Research*, 34 (October, 1964), 456-458.

[19] James A. Schellenberg, "Group Size as a Factor in Success of Academic Discussion Groups," *Journal of Educational Sociology*, 33 (October, 1959), 73-79.

[20] Kay Ware, "Significant Aspects of the St. Louis Program," *Elementary English*, 40 (October, 1963), 611-614.

[21] A. Sterl Artley, "Oral Language Growth and Reading Ability," *Elementary School Journal*, 53 (February, 1953), 321-327.
Ruth G. Strickland, "Interrelationships Between Language and Reading," *Volta Review*, 60 (September, 1958), 334-336.

[22] Research Council of the Great Cities Program for School Improvement, *Promising Practices from the Projects for the Culturally Deprived*. Chicago: The Council, April, 1964.

[23] Martin Deutsch, "The Disadvantaged Child and the Learning Process," *Education in Depressed Areas*, A. Harry Passow (ed.). New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1963.

ignoring their lack of perceptual experiences. Baynham described an experimental program in San Francisco which utilized this perceptual-experience principle and taught culturally deprived children by look, listen, and touch methods.[24] Kaplan, however, pointed to the importance of motivation in developing the language skills of culturally disadvantaged youngsters, by showing the growth in speech occurring in programs that attempt to improve a child's self-image.[25] Teaching English to culturally deprived students as a second language has also received attention. In one study, oral models provided the students were in the form of records to be played on inexpensive, manually-operated playback equipment.[26] All of the programs for culturally deprived children described so far have yet to be evaluated by means of a systematic, controlled investigation.

Skeels in 1938 and Dawe in 1942 studied the effects of programs for children who had been culturally deprived as a result of living in orphanages.[27] In Skeel's study, control and experimental groups were equated as to IQ, age, sex, length of residence in the orphanage, nutritional status, and sensory defects. The experimental group was provided with a nursery school experience in which perceptual and oral communication experiences were available. Although the loss of language ability continued with both groups, children in the experimental group showed less retardation and in some cases significant growth in vocabulary, articulation, and sentence organization. In Dawe's study specific training in language was provided for an experimental group of orphanage children. The experimental group made greater gains than a matched group of orphanage children on vocabulary and IQ measures.

The effect of complete oral language deprivation was described by Mason a number of years ago.[28] The child described had been imprisoned in a small room with a mute and uneducated mother for six and one-half years. Through sensory experiences, unremitting instruction, and improved physical care, the child was taught to speak and was brought up to normal intelligence in less than two years time.

Wood, also earlier, reported an instructional program for another type of disadvantaged child—one with a speech defect.[29] In this study both control and experimental groups were given speech therapy, but the mothers of the experimental group were given psychotherapy. The combination mother-child treatment was found to be more effective than the treatment of the child alone. A more recent study, by Sommers, also demonstrates the importance of including the mother in the treatment of speech defects.[30] Sommers found that a group of speech-defective children whose mothers had been given a small amount

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[24] Dorsey Baynham, "The Great Cities Projects," *N.E.A. Journal*, 52 (April, 1963), 17-20.

[25] Bernard A. Kaplan, "Issues in Educating the Culturally Disadvantaged," *Phi Delta Kappan*, 45 (November, 1963), 71-76.

[26] Gerald Dykstra, "Columbia University Curriculum Study Center: Materials for Teaching English as a Second Language," *College English*, 25 (December, 1963), 225.

[27] Harold M. Skeels, and others, *A Study of Environmental Stimulation*, University of Iowa Studies in Child Welfare 15. Iowa City: University of Iowa, 1938.
Helen C. Dawe, "A Study of the Effect of an Educational Program Upon Language Development and Related Mental Functions in Young Children," *Journal of Experimental Education*, 11 (December, 1942), 200-209.

[28] Marie K. Mason, "Learning to Speak After Six and One-Half Years of Silence," *Journal of Speech Disorders*, 7 (December, 1942), 295-304.

[29] Kenneth S. Wood, "Parental Maladjustment and Functional Articulatory Defects in Children," *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, 11 (December, 1946), 255-275.

[30] Ronald K. Sommers, "Factors in the Effectiveness of Mothers Trained to Aid in Speech Correction," *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, 27 (May, 1962), 178-186.

of training in speech correction showed greater improvement than a group whose mothers had not been trained. Previously, Sommers found that both speech therapy and speech improvement given to experimental groups—even without the participation of the mothers—resulted in improved articulation as contrasted with the progress of control groups.[81]

Thus it is possible for specific oral language programs to lead to specific improvements for speech-handicapped children. This same relationship between specific instruction and specific results is also true of normal speaking children. For example, Emerick randomly assigned forty-seven children to morning and afternoon kindergarten sessions.[82] She found that the age, IQ, parental occupations, and articulation pre-test scores were similar for the two groups. On the basis of a coin toss, the afternoon group was selected to receive twenty-six speech improvement lessons, each lasting between ten and fifteen minutes and given twice weekly for thirteen weeks. The results showed articulation errors of the afternoon group changing from thirty-six to sixteen, while the articulation errors of the morning group changed only from thirty-three to twenty-nine.

Black reported research by World War II Air Force Personnel to improve the intelligibility of oral messages.[83] These researchers found that the ability of people to be understood over an electronic system varied from ten to ninety-five percent. Further findings were: (1) objective measures were much more readily accepted than criticisms from speech instructors; (2) quality of voice is a much more important factor for intelligibility than pitch, rate, or loudness. (Voices which are full and resonant result in messages that are much more easily understood than thin, metallic, or muffled voices.) Black concluded that more emphasis in speech instruction should be given to the acoustical nature of speech.

Johnson compared two methods of public speaking instruction: one the traditional platform speaking approach and the other a group discussion program in which controversial issues were studied out of class and discussed informally in class.[84] The gain in voice and in word choice was fifty-six percent better for those in the group discussion program. According to Johnson, this better showing by the group discussion students was possible because the discussion situation provided more feedback and greater incentive for improvement. However, since the judgments of improvement were made subjectively by the experimenter, the results reported may show a bias.

An instructional program comparing the effectiveness of written drill with self-selected drill performed with a tape recorder was found by Moyer to be effective with fourth-, sixth-, and eighth-grade groups with improvements in written and oral usage being greater for the groups using the oral drill or "ear-training" approach.[85]

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[81] Ronald K. Sommers, *et al.*, "Effects of Speech Therapy and Speech Improvement upon Articulation and Reading," *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, 26 (February, 1961), 27-38.

[82] Lonnie Emerick, "Speech Improvement in the Kindergarten," *Education*, 84 (May, 1964), 565-568.

[83] John W. Black, "The Implications for General Speech Education of Wartime Research on Voice and Articulation," *National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin*, 32 (January, 1948), 108-117.

[84] Alma Johnson, "Teaching the Fundamentals of Speech Through Group Discussion," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 25 (October, 1939), 440-447.

[85] Haverly O. Moyer, "Can Ear-Training Improve English Usage?" *Elementary English*, 33 (April, 1956), 216-219.

*Summary*

Research lends support to the general observation that the home and school are environmental forces of vital importance in the development of oral language. In the home such factors as the extent of adult contacts, the degree and kinds of pressures from parents, and the cultural mores related to socioeconomic position seem to influence the level of oral language maturity which children attain. In school the oral language proficiency of children appears to be enhanced by instructional programs which offer specific practice in articulation, voice control, usage, and other elements of oral expression.

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GLORIA L. HORRWORTH

# Listening: A Facet of Oral Language

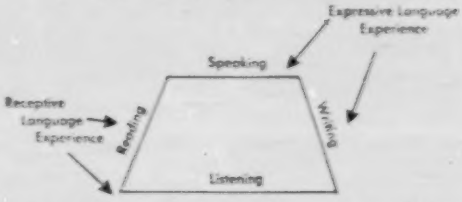
As recently as 1958, textbooks used in graduate courses on research in the teaching of the language arts described such arts as consisting of reading, writing, speaking, and spelling. Although probes into the mysteries surrounding listening had begun, the gap between practice and research was great, due to difficulties of data retrieval, lack of a conceptual framework, and the scarcity of tools and techniques for making the teaching of listening operational for the classroom teacher.

More recently the gap between research and practice has narrowed, and tools and techniques have appeared. However, a considerable disparity still exists and a conceptual framework for choosing tools and techniques and using them is only in the process of development. This report furthers this development by suggesting a conceptual model based on research findings and indicates methods and techniques for making the teaching of listening practicable for teachers.

*An Overview*

In the quadratic context of the language arts, the receptive language functions of listening and reading and the expressive functions of speaking and writing, listening occupies a baseline position and may be diagramed as follows:

**Table 1**
**Listening Occupying a Baseline Position**




In addition to increasing concern being shown for the teaching of listening, the importance of its role in the entire language function has recently received significant attention. Historically, constructive discontent led first to research regarding the graphic phases of communication; this was followed by investigations into the nature of oral language and its development, investigations which have resulted in a revision of the simplistic view of listening long held by many educators. Thus, that everyone who can hear knows how to listen has been experimentally discredited. A recently published listening bibliography annotating 880 articles, many of a research nature, confirms the observation that the information-getting phase in this area of language is well under way, and there is no evidence of abatement.[1] The titles of the articles in this bibliography, and the annotations of these, indicate many differences in the uses of terminology. Thus the appearance of semantic swamps suggests the need for a definition of terms.

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[1] Sam Duker, *Listening Bibliography*. New York: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1964.

*Definitions and Guidelines*

*Auding:* In this review auding is defined as the gross process of listening to, recognizing, and interpreting spoken symbols.[2] This definition is holistic in nature and embraces the hearing act, the listening act, and the comprehending act.[3] Thus auding herein is not defined as a distinguishable stage of listening; that is, hearing, listening, and auding are not recognized as separate stages.

This reviewer's interpretation of the research findings of Brown, Caffrey, Furness, and others is expressed in the following paradigm: Auding = Hearing + Listening + Cognizing.

This paradigm is operational from at least three points of view:[4]

1. It is consistent with findings in learning theory which recognize that cognition is the central process or intermediary within the organism involved in all communication.[5]
2. By considering aspects of auding relational and configurational rather than as discrete, hierarchical stages, we will come closer to its actual nature.
3. Researchers and teachers using this lexicon will not be flying in the face of the general public's definition of listening, to give attention with the ear for the purpose of hearing.

*Hearing:* Hearing is the process by which sound waves are received, modified, and relayed along the nervous system by the ear. Factors affecting the hearing act are those of:

1. Acuity or the ability to respond to various frequencies (tones) at various intensities (loudness levels).
2. Binaurality or the fused functioning of both ears in coordination with each other.[6]
3. Masking or the simultaneous input of extraneous sound which can cover, drown out, or otherwise alter the sound under audition.[7]
4. Auditory fatigue or the effects of sustained exposure to sounds of the same frequency or intensity which can induce lowered levels of efficiency; this is especially true for sounds in the speech range which are most likely to produce fatigue.[8]

*Listening:* Listening is the process of directing attention to and thereby becoming aware of sound sequences. Archaic meanings of the Old English derivative word *list* include "to like" and "to choose." In modern usage, "to heed" or "to yield to advice" are common dictionary meanings. Affective behavior or attitudinal responses are clearly implied. In a bulletin to teachers entitled "What Can Be Done About Listening," Ralph Nichols describes ten poor habits as a listener's roadblocks to effective oral-aural communication. They are as follows:

*1. Calling a subject dull
*2. Criticizing a speaker
*3. Getting overstimulated
*4. Listening only for facts

[2] Donald Pardie Brown, "And Having Ears They Hear Not," *NEA Journal*, 39 (November, 1950), 586-587.

[3] John Gardner Caffrey, "Auding as a Research Problem," *California Journal of Educational Research*, 4 (September, 1953), 155-161.

[4] Stanford E. Taylor, *Listening*. NEA What Research Says Series Bulletin, 29 (April, 1964).

[5] Emerald V. Dechant, *Improving the Teaching of Reading*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964, p. 488.

[6] Ira J. Hirsh, *The Measurement of Hearing*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1952.

[7] G. A. Miller, "The Masking of Speech," *Psychological Bulletin*, 44 (March, 1947), 105-129.

[8] Stanford E. Taylor, *What Research Says to the Teacher: Listening*. Washington, D. C.: National Education Association, April, 1964, p. 8.

5. Trying to outline everything
*6. Faking attention
*7. Tolerating distractions
*8. Choosing only what is easy
*9. Allowing emotion-laden words to interfere with listening
10. Wasting differential time between speech and thought speed.[9]

All of the starred items of poor listening behavior seem to be affective behaviors; that is, they reflect interests, attitudes, and values.

*Cognizing:* Cognition is a generic term used often to denote all of the various aspects of knowing, including perception, judgment, reasoning, remembering; and thinking and imagining. A more specific meaning exists for cognitive theorists who have suggested that an organism's response is largely determined by a central process (rather than peripheral intermediaries) within the organism. This central process influences an individual's reactions to stimuli and provides him with a representation of it. Field theorists refer to this representational process as cognition.[10] That such a process is part of the auding experience is helpful in explaining its complexity and in gaining the understanding that auding consists of more than hearing (sensation) and listening (affect factors). Relative to the auding phenomenon subfactors (abilities or skills) in cognizing would at least consist of these aspects of conceptualizing experiences:

1. Making comparisons
2. Noting sequences of details
3. Indexing
4. Categorizing
5. Drawing inferences
6. Drawing conlusions
7. Recognizing relationships, noting associations
8. Mentally reorganizing in terms of past experience (reordering)
9. Abstracting main ideas
10. Forming sensory images.

*The Role of Auding in Oral Language*

Auding is the first language art that the child develops. He learns his language by ear, and whatever skills he brings to school were first learned by his listening and attending to the speech of those around him. This can seem to complicate the problem of the teaching of listening because it suggests a variety of individual differences in learning styles that are quite firmly developed when the child enters school. Many classroom teachers who prefer teaching in the lower elementary grades when queried respond that by choosing a primary grade level they do not have to undo, reteach, or help the child unlearn aspects of reading and writing. There is high motivation on the part of the learners, and a clear road ahead. Attention directed to improving auding skills might not hold this same kind of appeal. It has been observed and verified objectively that school children spend 54 percent of the instructional day learning by listening, yet only 16 percent of teachers questioned ranked listening as the most important language skill.[11]

Auding is a people process as well as a language process; it is reciprocal, and in order to listen, an individual needs to have experienced an attentive listener interested in him and in what he is saying. Kindergarten teachers report that their good

[9] Ralph Nichols, "What Can Be Done About Listening?" *Supervisor's Notebook*, Scott, Foresman Service Bulletin, 22 (Spring, 1960), 1-4.

[10] Edward Joseph Shoben, "Viewpoints from Related Disciplines," *Teachers College Record*, 60 (February, 1960), 272-282.

[11] Miriam Wilt, "A Study of Teacher Awareness of Listening As a Factor in Elementary Education," *Journal of Educational Research*, 43 (April, 1950), 626-636.

listeners, most often, have a mother or some other adult who is an attentive listener to the child.

The auditor, not the speaker, is the prime director of the learning process.[12] He controls the input of oral communication. Among the four facets of language, only in auding is there no overt control over the flow of words. The speaker can stop speaking, the reader can lay aside his book, the writer can put down his pen. In each case there is no longer visible involvement in the activity, if such is the desire. The listener, however, remains visibly involved. But because of this people-process nature of aural communication, the listener learns ways of covertly tuning out, when he becomes aurally fatigued or disinterested. The listener may stop the flow of words by directing thought processes elsewhere, or through sporadic flights of fantasy. More significant to the learning process is the fact that he is often unaware of the tactics he employs.

*The Relationship of Speech Competency to Listening Comprehension*

Research does not yet reveal a clear picture of the nature of the relationship between speaking and listening effectiveness. Whether or not a valid measurable relationship exists has been questioned.[13] Working with a large number of adults, 180 panels, each having twelve members, Black reports correlations between listening and speaking scores ranging from .02 to .87, with a median of .21.

Stark, using 175 college speech students as subjects, found vocal speech capacity and listening to have a .36 correlation.[14] Howe's study, also with college students, shows a correlation of .43 between speech effectiveness as judged by a panel of college speech instructors and listening as measured by the Brown-Carlsen Listening Comprehension Test.[15]

Evertts reported a definite and positive relationship between children's oral language structure and their listening ability as measured by the Marten Test.[16] Other studies undertaken with children of early elementary school age report much higher correlations than do those studies previously described in which the subjects have been adults.[17] Thus it would appear that while factors of interdependency and interaction between speech and auding in the young child exist, the nature and extent of this interdependency and interaction are assumed rather than supported by research.

*Other Related Findings*

The coefficients of correlation found suggest also that there are different components of listening ability and that these vary in their relationships to other factors.[18] Listening is not a discrete skill, neither is it a generalized ability; it is a cluster of

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[12] Emerald Dechant, *Improving the Teaching of Reading*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964, p. 95.

[13] John W. Black, "A Relationship Between Speaking and Listening," *Joint Project Report No. NM 001 104 500, 54*. The Ohio State University and Acoustic Laboratory, 1955.

[14] Joel Stark, "An Investigation of the Relationship of the Vocal and Communicative Aspects of Speech Competency with Listening Comprehension," *Speech Monographs*, 24 (June, 1957), 98-99.

[15] Doris L. Howe, *An Exploratory Study Concerning Listening Comprehension and Speaking Effectiveness*, unpublished master's thesis, University of Arizona, 1960.

[16] Eldonna L. Evertts, "An Investigation of the Structure of Children's Oral Language Compared with Silent Reading, Oral Reading, and Listening Comprehension," *Dissertation Abstracts*, 22 (1962) 3038.

[17] Annetta Vester Evans, "Listening Related to Speaking in the First Grade," unpublished master's thesis, Atlanta University, 1960.

[18] David H. Russell, "A Conspectus of Recent Research on Listening Abilities," *Elementary English*, 41 (March, 1964), 262-267.

specific abilities closely related to those needed in the reading task.[19]

Due to the tendency of some writers to view the process of auding as a generalized ability, a question has been raised as to whether or not knowledge about listening contributes to the ability to listen.[20] However, the overwhelming majority of researchers state that listening skills can be taught; and as early as 1949, articles appearing in *School Review, Education Research Bulletin, Journal of Education,* and many other journals stressed that the school has a responsibility for the teaching of listening. Many courses of study and curriculum guides now approach listening as a separate language arts ability, making it incumbent upon the classroom teacher to improve the quality of the teaching-learning act in this area.

*Measures to Improve Auding Capabilities*

Lasting improvement in any performance usually occurs as a result of a strengthening of many factors requisite to that performance. Any attempt to improve the quality of aural communication must be based on the knowledge that all aspects of the auding process—hearing, listening, cognizing—are of significance. Learning tasks should be so structured that skills in all three areas are at some point being stressed. No one lesson or brief series of lessons, drills, or activities will make the desired improvement in listening ability. A plan of action must also include measures (exercises, games, *etc.*) for strengthening specific skills as well as ways of integrating these skills and learnings with all subject matter.[21] Specific suggestions for activities are now included in texts on the teaching of reading.[22] The development of listening centers in classrooms is an example of attempts to optimize more than one aspect of auding. Such centers include an auto-instructional device consisting of a record player or tape recorder, earphones (varying numbers of), and response sheets which are completed by the listeners through the course of the listening experience.

*Observations on Listening Centers*

This writer for the past several years has worked in various school jurisdictions with children and teachers setting up such centers, helping in the acquisition and organization of equipment, helping to develop teacher skills in producing taped lessons.[23] Descriptions of such listening centers are increasingly appearing in periodicals on local, state, and national coverage levels and should prove helpful for schools wishing to pursue this development.[24] The following observations regarding listening centers are pertinent here:

> An individual child listening through earphones is at work improving auding abilities optimally on two levels: at the hearing level because problems of masking, binaurality, and often acuity are minimized, and at the cognitive level because he is guided into thinking, making judgments, and following directions. Carefully structured taped lessons tighten teacher-prepared lessons, extraneous and confusing

[19] Richard S. Hampleman, "Comparison of Listening and Reading Comprehension Ability of Fourth and Sixth Grade Pupils," *Elementary English,* 35 (January, 1958), 49-53.

[20] Herbert Hackett, "A Null Hypothesis, There Is Not Enough Evidence," *Education,* 75 (January, 1955), 149-51.

[21] Arthur Heilman, *Principles and Practices of Teaching Reading.* Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., 1961, pp. 45-50.

[22] Emerald Dechant, *Improving the Teaching of Reading.* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964, pp. 97-100.

[23] Gloria L. Horrworth, "The Listening Center," *Maryland Teachers Journal,* (January, 1964).

[24] Miriam Hoffman, "Our Listening Center Livens Language Arts," *Elementary School Journal,* 63 (April, 1963), 381-385.

verbalisms are reduced, and the listener receives immediate feedback as to the appropriateness of his written response.

Tapes are most often developed with a particular subject matter as the organizing factor (reading skills, literature, spelling). Cognitive functioning could be more effectively strengthened if the previously mentioned factors in aural cognizing served as guidelines for lesson construction.

It has been the experience of this writer that the use of listening center equipment did little to improve what has been herein described as the level of listening or the affective aspect of the act. Empathic listening, reactive listening, projective listening, and interpretive listening are some of the kinds of listening that develop in face-to-face relationships where one speaks and one listens. The utilization of a listening center can do much to improve many auding skills but no machined device can provide the most essential components for producing good listeners. These the classroom teacher must provide.

*The Role of the Teacher and Implications of Effects on Listening Behavior*

Classroom climate which emanates from the leadership style that is set and generated by the teacher has far greater impact on the auding experience than does any other factor. Reasons for this have been explored in terms of affect cues in communication through the work of J. R. Gibb.[25] In an article, "Defensive Communication," Gibb discusses the necessity of reducing group defensiveness. Defensive behavior occurs when an individual perceives threat or anticipates threat in the group. Defensive behavior engenders defensive listening and this, in turn, produces postural, facial, and verbal cues which raise the defense level of the original communicator. This defense-arousal prevents the listener from concentrating on the message.

Teachers who generate a supportive climate through their own behavior and reactions in verbal and silent language produce learners with improved listening skills and are effective teachers of listening whether they are conscious of it or not. Perhaps such a teacher has never had access to the Russells' excellent *Listening Aids Through the Grades*, nor has had the opportunity to benefit from Miriam Wilt's suggestions of activities in the teaching of listening.[26, 27] These writers, aware of the central significance of a teacher's speaking and listening behavior, stress that the first step in teaching listening is taken by the teacher in analyzing his own listening habits.

Gibb asks teachers, parents, and managers to examine the total communication climate since, if the climate is defense reductive or supportive, the listener will not distort from his own projections.[28] Gibb suggests that the listener will be better able to concentrate on the structure, the content, and the cognitive meanings of the message in such a climate.

*A Look at Listening Climates*

In recent developments in the psychology of learning, there is an appreciation of the fact that learning takes place within a total context that is more than just the sum of the components of learning. There

[25] Jack R. Gibb, "Defensive Communication," *Readings in Managerial Psychology*, (1964), 191-192.

[26] David H. Russell and Elizabeth F. Russell, *Listening Aids Through the Grades*. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1959.

[27] Miriam E. Wilt, "Let's Teach Listening," in *Creative Ways of Teaching the Language Arts*. Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1957.

[28] J. R. Gibb, "Defense Level and Influence in Small Groups," *Leadership and Interpersonal Behavior*, (1961) 66-81.

are specific content and skills to be learned which adds to the store of competence; there are also the pervasive qualitative aspects of the learning situation which affect the self-feeling, the images of authority, the delineation of psychological planes of safety and adventure. These inevitably affect each other.[29]

How does a listening-learning climate which is alive with the spirit of adventure differ from one which is not? If the affect cues sent out by the speaker (teacher) are defense reductive, positive attitudes for learning which include curiosity, manipulation (of ideas), spontaneity, and awareness will be sustained and nurtured.

Gibb says "Defense reductive climates result when the speech behavior which a listener perceives possesses characteristics of:

1. Description—rather than evaluation
2. Problem orientation—as opposed to control
3. Spontaneity—rather than strategy
4. Empathy—not neutrality
5. Equality—as opposed to superiority
6. Provisionalism—rather than certainty.[30]

Children perceived by other children as good leaders and good sports, those who are listened to by peers, often seem to automatically employ defense reductive techniques. Listen in on a playground argument—one which was repetitive many times in the writer's experience and is familiar to classroom teachers. The participants are fifth-grade children playing a game of baseball. Two are fighting. The combatants are separated. Their respective friends are yelling as to who started it, and the yard duty teacher is asked to arbitrate. One boy speaks up; the others begin listening. He says something of this nature:

> We didn't see what happened, but they're fighting over who has next ups. (pause) Bill's nose is bleeding; maybe he should go to the nurse. (pause) What about the game, you guys; we have only five minutes left.

The children listen; they take their positions; the game continues.

An adult hearing this might comment that the children listened because what the one said was reasonable. Specifically what he said was descriptive (he made no attempt to place blame) and problem-oriented (how to get the nose bleed taken care of and how to get the game going again). A "natural" leader? Perhaps. A defense reductive communicator? Yes.

### *A New View of Empathy*

Empathy and neutrality as aspects of the listener's environment merit special attention by the classroom teacher because it has somehow seemed in the past (perhaps as a misapplication of non-directive counseling techniques) to be sound pedagogical practice to be emotionally neutral, to withhold how one feels, and in certain specific instances, such reaction is warranted. However, when neutrality in speech appears to the listener to indicate a lack of concern for his welfare, he becomes defensive. Group members usually desire to be perceived as valued persons, as individuals of special worth, and as objects of concern and affection.[31]

Bruno Bettleheim, working in a consultative role with teachers concerned with problems of the disadvantaged, relates a

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[29] Barbara Biber, Elizabeth Gilkeson, and Charlotte Winsor, "Teacher Education at Bank Street College," *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 37 (April, 1959), 550-568.

[30] J. R. Gibb, "Sociopsychological Processes of Group Instruction," *The Dynamics of Instructional Groups*. Fifty-Ninth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part II. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960, pp. 115-135.

[31] Gibb, "Defensive Communication," *op. cit.*

dialogue between himself and a particular teacher who was having problems with a little girl.[82] The child alternated between extremely aggressive and extremely dependent behavior, making comments to the teacher such as "you ugly old white woman." When asked how she reacts, the teacher said, "Well, I think I try to get her to sit down or something like that and actually ignore the problem. I never take her comments personally."

"Now, that is hard for me to believe," Dr. Bettleheim replies, "if someone says to you, 'I hate your ugly white face,' you are certainly going to be bothered unless you don't take the child seriously. This is what I'm driving at. If we don't take a person's nasty remarks seriously, that means that we don't take him seriously. It implies you're irresponsible, no good, of no account. Because if a person is of any account, then it seems to me that we must take seriously what he says . . . In a situation like that, I'm shocked each time they do it; and the more shocked I am, the sooner they stop . . . If you pay no attention to a remark like this, the child will be driven to keep it up all year long. . . . If, on the other hand, she can hurt you, she might think 'Do I really want to hurt my teacher?' And that is what we're striving for."

"Speech with low-affect that communicates little warmth or caring is in such contrast with the affect-laden speech in social situations that it sometimes communicates rejection."[83]

In the teacher's attempt to de-emotionalize much of the living-learning process with children, he often doesn't listen or does not take seriously or personally their remarks, and by so doing can be communicating rejection and feeding a defense arousal that prevents a listener from concentrating on any message under audition.

An anthropologist working in a volunteer community action group with high school drop-outs reports a conversation with one young man who implored him to "teach me to listen to the teachers—I want to—I hear what they're saying, and I can understand but I just can't listen to some of them."

*A Look at the Future*

The teaching of listening has gone through many of the same phases as has the teaching of reading: periods of componential analysis—defining and refining requisite sequential skills and attitudes. The pace has been more rapid in listening for many reasons now taken for granted by mid-twentieth century educators. When some of the pieces of the puzzle of learning to read were placed in frameworks called the language experience approach to reading or individualized reading, the new emphasis was upon the "who" in the process; and what we now do depends on the individual involved. It is reasonable to assume that the teaching of listening will reach this point also. For example, we now have available lists of sequences of skills as well as skill building techniques described in new texts (usually chapters in books of the teaching of reading or language arts).

When teachers become more familiar with the totality of the reading process, along with a deeper knowledge of the learner, more individualization of instruction in listening will be possible. An incident which occurred in this writer's experience might help to strengthen this assumption for the reader.

While working with a group of fourth graders in an attempt to improve their skill in forming sensory images, a record

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[82] Bruno Bettleheim, "Teaching the Disadvantaged," *NEA Journal*, 54:6 (September, 1965), 11-12.

[83] Gibb, "Defensive Communication," *op. cit.*

album, *Creative Thinking Through Aural Imagery*, was used. A band of the record (consisting of a sequence of sounds—footsteps, a chain being pulled, crickets, frogs, a sudden splashing of water, the rhythmic splashing of water) was played. The students were instructed to listen first and then to draw what they thought those sounds could mean. All of them did this. Most of the children drew and later discussed someone taking a boat ride on a pond. However, one boy produced an entirely different and quite unusual picture using the footsteps and chain sound cues only. When questioned by the other children about why he didn't include a body of water, he said he didn't hear any water, nor did he hear the crickets, frogs, *etc.* Later in talking with his classroom teacher, she asserted that this was the boy's chief problem—that although his intelligence quotient was the highest in the class, much higher than the next closest, he seldom listened long enough to anything to get it right. We then together explored the possibility that perhaps this boy's brightness was a contributing factor in his poor critical listening habits. Perhaps his store of stimuli of meaningful association was so rich that he became totally involved cognitively and couldn't continue listening. It was suggested also that it might be well for him to understand this about himself or about his listening habits. Many adults while listening to talks or lectures find it helpful to "doodle." Reasons for the doodling on paper are certainly varied, but one bright adult student when queried about it said to this writer that he did it to get extra ideas out of his head so that he could go on listening. Such self-help techniques point to the possibility that more attention in the future should be given to the individualized nature of the auding experience.

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O. W. Kopp

# The Evaluation of Oral Language Activities: Teaching and Learning

"When I go to school, I'm going to learn to read and write." This comment reflects the aspirations of most four year olds about to enter the magic land of school. Their concern is centered upon the two language arts known to them. After all, they already know how to speak and listen.

Also, unfortunately, too many teachers fail to recognize the need to teach speaking and listening. The term "language arts" refers to a quarternary discipline, but too often in actual practice the language arts are reduced to a binary discipline.

It is understandable and logical that much concerted effort is directed toward the teaching of reading and writing. At the same time, it is incomprehensible and illogical to assume that no further improvement is needed in the skills of speaking and listening.

Just how important is oral communication? Man in all his wisdom has discovered only two ways to settle differences—by using words or by using weapons. Democratic, peaceful resolution of problems involves discussion; listening is necessarily half of this dualism. Our world is one in which oral communication is a vitally necessary tool for understanding and learning; it frequently dominates as the primary mode of communication.

In the hope that more teachers may wish to do a better job in the teaching of speaking and listening, pertinent research has been reviewed with the aim of giving direction to the teaching of oral communication. Attention must also be given to the knowledge available from research which will assist teachers in diagnosing and measuring abilities in the oral language skills and give direction to their improvement.

*Listening*

Very little disagreement about the feasibility of teaching listening exists. Duker's extensive bibliography on listening is prefaced by a statement that listening can be improved by proper teaching.[1] Shane and Mulry, after examining many references on listening, also conclude that listening can be taught and evaluated.[2] Hatfield comments that advances in teaching English include the realization that ". . . listening is an art as complex as reading and is improvable through instruction and guided practice."[3] The National Council of Teach-

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[1] Sam Duker, *Listening Bibliography*. New York and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1964.

[2] Harold C. Shane and June Grant Mulry, *Improving Language Arts Instruction Through Research*. Washington, D. C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1963, 102-110.

[3] Wilbur Hatfield, "Advances in the Teaching of English," *NEA Journal*, 45 (February, 1956) 90-92.

ers of English has stated that listening should be taught because it is the most used of the language arts, it is often poorly done, and evidence suggests that listening habits may be improved through training.[4]

Berry urges teachers to chart their inquiry regarding listening into four major areas.[5] She suggests:

1. A frank analysis of your own listening experience.
2. A thoughtful study of the listening situation in your classroom.
3. A development in children of concern for their own listening competence.
4. A development of the problem in relation to communication, with listening playing its essential role—not as a value in itself but as a means to the more important meeting of minds.

Other writers agree with Berry that the first step in teaching listening is for the teacher to examine his own listening habits. Nichols has devised a self-rating scale to be used in making an analysis of one's poor listening habits.[6]

Brown has stated, "The most basic and most important element for auding competence is possessing and imparting a reliable concept of what it is that the student is being asked to improve."[7] A student must first recognize his deficiencies and then set up a plan for doing something about them.

Experiences should be provided to encourage children's use of the scientific method of inquiry into listening as well as into other subject areas. The following questions are examples of the kinds of topics which could be used as springboards for pupil discussions and pupil investigations:

1. How does listening differ from hearing?
2. What are some good listening habits?
3. What are some poor listening habits?
4. How do good listeners help a speaker?
5. How does a speaker's personality affect a listener?
6. Why does the same word often mean different things to different people?
7. How can a listener guard against accepting falsehoods for the truth?
8. How do the experiences you have had in your lives affect your listening?
9. How can wide reading improve listening habits?
10. How can you learn to tell which ideas are most important and which ones are least important?

Evaluation, of necessity, must be based upon a standard. For listening this standard is the "good listener"—one who has a wide range of interests, respect for other people and their viewpoints, and the ability to delay his own reactions. The poor listener often precludes further listening by reacting instantaneously, vigorously, and without critical thought.

Stromer suggests the following as examples of poor listening habits: tuning out one's mind; thinking we already know what is going to be said; looking for mannerisms of the speaker instead of listening; doing other things while supposedly listening; and hearing words instead of ideas.[8]

To evaluate accurately a child's listening performances, the teacher needs to recognize the importance of several factors.

1. He must take into consideration factors accounting for individual differences:
   a. Intelligence and aptitude.

[4] National Council of Teachers of English, *Language Arts for Today's Children*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1954, pp. 71-105.
[5] Althea Berry, "Experiences in Listening," *Elementary English*, 28 (March, 1951) 130-32.
[6] Ralph G. Nichols, "How Well Do You Listen?" *Education*, 75 (January, 1955) 302.
[7] Don P. Brown, "And Having Ears They Hear Not," *NEA Journal*, 39 (November, 1950) 587.
[8] Walter F. Stromer, "Learn How to Listen," *This Week Magazine*, 16 (February 21, 1960) 13-15.

b. Reading comprehension ability and vocabulary development.
c. Cultural background.
d. Interests.
e. Personality traits.

2. He must consider factors relating to attention as preparation for auditory perception:
   a. Physiological sensitivity and fatigue.
   b. Psychological sensitivity and concentration.
   c. Readiness to respond.
   d. Interference of distracting elements.
   e. Training of the sense organs.
3. He must consider other personal factors determining what one perceives:
   a. Individual needs.
   b. Perceiving what one wishes to perceive.
   c. Personal bias and prejudices.

An analysis of listening problems should include diagnosis of possible hearing difficulties and a consideration of total adjustment, including personality, an element which has been found to be closely related to listening ability.[9] An analysis of listening problems should also include an assessment of the vocabulary development of the child. The teacher needs an awareness of the vocabulary development of the child and an awareness of the quality and quantity of the child's listening and speaking both in and out of school.[10,11]

In the evaluation of listening, both formal and informal tests may be used. One is not a substitute for the other. Standardized tests or teacher-made tests can be used to evaluate such skills as listening for directions, listening for word meaning, listening to draw conclusions, listening for immediate recall of details, listening to identify the main point, and listening to identify sequence.

Standardized tests have the advantage of providing for comparison with a norm; interpretation by percentile ranks and scores; known reliability, validity, and difficulty; predetermined relationships to other test instruments; and ease of administration and scoring.[12] Brown believes that appropriate test instruments must be developed for all levels if we are to reach a needed understanding of listening.[13]

Standardized listening tests for the lower elementary grades have been almost nonexistent. The *Sequential Tests for Educational Progress* (STEP) include a listening test, but this test is not appropriate below grade four. However, Wright devised and standardized a listening test for grades two through four, which has been used by others and found reliable for grades two and three but is considered too easy for most children in grade four.[14]

Informal evaluative techniques can be designed to fit specific classroom situations. Brown reported the use of informal evaluation in three of the most common listening situations—casual listening, purposeful listening, and notetaking while listening. Students were able to assess their listening efficiency as the result of tests given in each situation. Purposeful listening resulted in better comprehension than casual listening. Notetaking seemed to lower comprehension at the time, but retesting showed that notetaking delayed forgetting.[15]

Even in the early primary grades children can formulate standards for listening and

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[9] Walter F. Stromer, "Listening and Personality," *Education*, 75 (January, 1955) 322-26.
[10] Don P. Brown, "Teaching Aural English," *English Journal*, 39 (March, 1950) 128-36.
[11] Margaret B. Parke, "Children's Ways of Talking and Listening," *Childhood Education*, 29 (January, 1953) 223-30.
[12] Don P. Brown, "Evaluating Student Performance in Listening," *Education*, 75 (January, 1955) 316-21.
[13] *Ibid.*
[14] Evan Leonard Wright, "The Construction of a Test of Listening Comprehension for the Second, Third and Fourth Grades," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Washington University, 1957. *Dissertation Abstracts*, 17 (October, 1957) 2226-27.
[15] Brown, *loc. cit.*

judge whether or not their performances meet their own standards. Self-evaluation checklists such as the following can help children become aware of the many factors involved in listening.

Checking-up on My Listening

| | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Did I remember to get ready for listening? | _____ | _____ |
| a. Was I seated comfortably where I could see and hear? | _____ | _____ |
| b. Were my eyes focused on the speaker? | _____ | _____ |
| 2. Was my mind ready to concentrate on what the speaker had to say? | _____ | _____ |
| a. Was I able to push other thoughts out of my mind for the time being? | _____ | _____ |
| b. Was I ready to think about the topic and call to mind the things I already knew about it? | _____ | _____ |
| c. Was I ready to learn more about the topic? | _____ | _____ |
| 3. Was I ready for "take-off?" | _____ | _____ |
| a. Did I discover in the first few minutes where the speaker was taking me? | _____ | _____ |
| b. Did I discover his central idea so that I could follow it through the speech? | _____ | _____ |
| 4. Was I able to pick out the ideas which supported the main idea? | _____ | _____ |
| a. Did I take advantage of the speaker's clues (such as first, next, *etc.*) to help organize the ideas in my mind? | _____ | _____ |
| b. Did I use my extra "think" time to summarize and take notes—either mentally or on paper? | _____ | _____ |
| 5. After the speaker finished and the facts were all in, did I evaluate what had been said? | _____ | _____ |
| a. Did this new knowledge seem to fit with the knowledge I already had? | _____ | _____ |
| b. Did I weigh each idea to see if I agreed with the speaker? | _____ | _____ |

If you marked questions *NO*, decide why you could not honestly answer them *YES*.

Wilt emphasized the importance of pupil participation when she stated: "Children learn best those things they live and do; they learn from each other. They cannot learn how to speak by listening entirely to the teacher speak, nor can they learn to listen to their peers when they seldom have the opportunity to listen to their peers."[16]

Listening to recordings of various regional speech patterns can focus the pupil's attention on similarities and differences. Listening to tape recordings of their own voices can lead students to the realization that each individual has his own personal idiolect. Simple diagrams which show rising and falling pitch help children become aware of the intonation patterns of our language.

Each year of school should find each child progressing toward increasingly sophisticated levels of speaking and listening maturity. Each child should become more and more aware of the characteristics of good listening and his own strengths and weaknesses relative to these standards. He should realize that good listeners must have an interest in people, hear people out, respect the other person's rights to express an opinion, have an interest in the points of view of others, and be interested in broadening his own viewpoints.

Upper elementary children are capable

[16] Miriam E. Wilt, "Let's Teach Listening," *Creative Ways of Teaching the Language Arts*. Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1957.

of evaluating their own listening powers by using the following criteria:

Do I
- Hold the thread of a discussion in mind?
- Listen to content even though it does not affect me directly?
- Watch for transitional phrases?
- Try to discount bias in a speaker?
- Disagree with a speaker courteously?
- Reserve judgment in listening to different viewpoints in discussion?
- Indicate by my remarks that I have turned over in my mind the ideas of others?[17]

Kegler has suggested that pupils keep logs of their listening activities. Analysis of these logs will prove helpful in the evaluation of listening experiences.[18]

Charting the flow of discussion may help students to recognize the importance of "equalizing" their roles as speakers and listener. Such an activity helps develop an understanding of the communication process, emphasizes the principles of effective communication, and provides practice in the use of communication skills. Through interaction, students are given a chance to sharpen their skills as well as to exchange ideas and viewpoints.

Frazier pointed out that listening can also be taught and evaluated by means of pupil conversations and group discussions in which the teacher and pupils analyze the role of the listener and how it is being fulfilled.[19] Pupils can also determine how the group leader's role differs from that of the participants.

The alert elementary school teacher will find countless ready-made opportunities to evaluate listening as children plan units of work, give reports, give directions and make announcements, tell or read stories, and speak in verse choirs.

The evaluation of listening should also include an analysis of the school environment by such questions as the following:

1. Is the classroom climate favorable for good listening?
2. Does each child feel secure and feel that his contribution is important?
3. Is there a real purpose for listening?
4. Is the seating arrangement adequate?
5. Is frequent pupil participation encouraged?
6. Is the length of presentation appropriate for the attention span of the pupils?
7. Are children encouraged to set standards for self-evaluation?
8. Do children have the opportunity to use what they hear?

Dale has stressed the importance of making the classroom a place in which listening or not listening matters to the student. He states that to teach listening effectively it is necessary for teachers to:

1. Regard communication as sharing;
2. Earn the right to speak by listening;
3. Create mood or disposition for others to speak;
4. Move from the simple to the complex;
5. Teach evaluation of the logic of a speech; and
6. Teach critical listening.[20]

The statement, "That to which the child is asked to listen in school should be worthy of time and thought" also emphasizes this view.[21] The school's task is to teach the child to listen objectively, appreciatively, and critically. Specific lessons for the primary purpose of teaching listening are stilted and artificial, according to Wilt. She

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[17] Wilt, *op cit.*, p. 88.
[18] Stanley Benjamin Kegler, "Techniques in Teaching Listening for Main Ideas," *English Journal*, 45 (January, 1956) 30-32.
[19] Alexander Frazier, "The Teaching of Listening: A Memo to Teachers," *Elementary English*, 35 (February, 1958) 111-12.
[20] Edgar Dale, *Audio-Visual Methods in Education*. New York: Dryden Press, 1954.
[21] Miriam E. Wilt, "Listening Skills Can Be Improved," *Instructor*, 72 (January, 1963) 6.

recommends using many regular classroom activities for teaching listening skills.[22]

As a means of developing more effective listening by pupils, Dawson and Zollinger suggest that the teacher take advantage of opportunities for listening; that the classroom atmosphere be relaxed, comfortable, quiet, and thus conducive to listening; that pupils be prepared for what they are about to hear; that they be led to expect meaning whenever they listen; that opportunities be arranged for the reproduction of the materials listened to; that the children set up standards for effective listening; and that they be guided in the evaluation of what they hear.[23]

Gardner believes that "in order to listen alertly and intelligently one needs to cultivate patience, discipline, and a deeply-rooted interest in others."[24] These same qualities are necessary if one hopes to teach others to listen. Even though the best way to teach listening may not yet have been established by research, everything possible should be done to improve students' listening skills.

Teaching the skills of listening involves awareness of the importance of listening; knowledge of the abilities, skills, understandings, attitudes, and appreciations acquired through the spoken word; assessment of the present listening abilities and habits of pupils; and provision for direct, systematic instruction in listening.[25]

*Speaking*

A recognition of the importance of oral communication and a realization that speaking is a part of this dualism foster a desire to improve speaking through teaching. The child enters school able to speak; but there are obvious deficiencies in his speaking skills. The need to teach speech or speaking has been accepted for many years; however, emphasis upon it and recognition of its importance have varied from time to time. Also the swing of the educational pendulum has focused attention on different phases of speech teaching—correction of physiological deficiencies, improving mechanics of speaking, encouraging public speaking, *etc.*

Wagner, in a survey of speech programs, notes the increasingly broad interpretation of speech and lists the criteria which he finds are being used to evaluate the adequacy of speech programs:

1. Provision for all pupils
2. Provision for the handicapped
3. Interpretation of speech as social behavior
4. Realism in scope and sequence
5. Development of ethical standards for speech.[26]

Because the same kinds of speaking—conversation, discussion, reporting, *etc.*—are used at all age levels, difficulties are inherent in defining the scope and sequence of a speech program. Beauchamp feels that the main areas for emphasis should be mechanics, individual performance, and performance as part of a group.[27]

Teachers need a well planned guide to use in comparing the levels of progress of the individual pupils within their classrooms. Dawson and Zollinger recommend that these standards be formulated by a

[22] Miriam E. Wilt, "The Teaching of Listening and Why," *Educational Screen*, 31 (April, 1952) 144-46.

[23] Mildred A. Dawson and Marian Zollinger, *Guiding Language Learning*. Yonkers, New York: World Book Company, 1957, pp. 160-92.

[24] John W. Gardner, "The Art of Listening," *Saturday Review*, 39 (June 2, 1956) 46.

[25] Harold A. Anderson, "Teaching the Art of Listening," *School Review*, 57 (February, 1949) 63-65.

[26] Guy Wagner, "What Schools Are Doing—Improving the Speech Program," *Education*, 8 (February, 1963) 380-82.

[27] George A. Beauchamp, *The Curriculum of the Elementary School*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1964, pp. 95-99.

committee of teachers and give an example of a sequential listing of goals worked out by teachers of the Portland, Oregon, public schools.[28]

The level of development of speaking skills varies from individual to individual. However, Strickland states "The standards which evolve from experience and advance progressively from level to level follow this general sequence.

1. Emphasis on freeing the individual and encouraging him to participate
2. Emphasis on increasing recognition of responsibility to others and the development of group consciousness
3. Emphasis on interplay of ideas and meeting of minds
4. Emphasis on responsibility for the value and the truth of one's remarks
5. Emphasis on the improvement of personal techniques such as voice and mannerisms
6. Emphasis on training for leadership in the carrying on of group processes."[29]

Evaluation of speech is a special problem, for "the transitory and usually unrecorded nature of oral communication makes systematic evaluation of it difficult."[30] A dearth of standardized tests of oral communication skills and abilities exists; therefore, it has been suggested that "in listening and speaking little dependence can be placed on standardized tests" and that "teacher-pupil-made tests, simple rating scales, tape recordings, children's own records, and observations of teachers can provide for emphasis on the improvement by each individual child in the course of each school year."[31]

The importance of the use of simple rating devices—comparison of voice recordings over time or comparison of voice recordings to a scale such as Netzer's—is discussed in *The English Language Arts*, but little has been done as a follow-up to these suggestions.[32] The view generally held is that regardless of the evaluative technique used, "Methods of appraisal should be devised by teachers actually working with children, and in some of the procedures the pupil should participate in rating himself or others."[33]

Teacher-child relationship, motivation, and classroom atmosphere are important factors to be considered.[34, 35] Bolz suggests the following questions as a guide for teacher self-evaluation:

> Do I recognize the need for children to practice oral expression?
> Do I consistently provide opportunities for children to communicate orally?
> Am I willing to work with children where I find them—willing to work patiently and understandingly with a shy child?
> How can I improve my own skills in oral expression? Do I set a good example in my speech—enunciating clearly, speaking comfortably and easily, organizing my thoughts logically?
> Do I listen to children? Do I give them my complete attention? Do I respond fully to their questions and comments?"[36]

Hopkins believes that ". . . attainment of 'self-confidence' has been overplayed as an

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[28] Dawson and Zollinger, *op cit.*, pp. 138-59, 249-307.

[29] Ruth G. Strickland, *The Language Arts in the Elementary School*, Second Edition. Boston: D. C. Heath and Co., 1957, p. 185.

[30] National Council of Teachers of English, *The English Language Arts*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1952, p. 431.

[31] Helen K. Mackintosh (Editorial Chairman), *Children and Oral Language*. Washington, D. C.: Association for Childhood Education International, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (NEA); Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association; Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1964.

[32] National Council of Teachers of English, *op. cit.*, pp. 431-33.

[33] Mackintosh, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

[34] National Council of Teachers of English, *op. cit.*, p. 433.

[35] Carrie Rasmussen, *Speech Methods in the Elementary School*, Revised. New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1962.

[36] George C. Bolz, "Promoting Oral Expression," *National Elementary Principal*, 42 (April, 1963) 41-43.

object of the speech course. . . . Of greater importance is his (the pupil's) knowledge of language, his skill in its use, his ability to contribute something of worth, his sense of values as expressed in the oral communication situation."[37]

Criteria for evaluation of pupil progress might be similar to Pronovost's listing of attitudes and abilities to develop in a speaking situation:

1. A desire to contribute worthwhile ideas effectively.
2. The ability to use words which express ideas clearly and accurately.
3. The ability to select and organize ideas effectively.
4. The ability to use voice and articulation so that speech will be heard and understood easily.
5. The ability to use appropriate posture, bodily actions, and visual aids.
6. The ability to adapt speech behavior and speech organization to group situations such as conversations and discussions.
7. The ability to communicate thought and mood in oral reading, choral speaking, and dramatic activities.[38]

One committee suggests that progress is being made toward the goals of speech teaching when the child shows a ". . . growing awareness of the responsibilities of both the listener and the speaker; an appreciation of the effects of oral language on oneself and others; a growing sensitivity to the influence of different purposes for communication on oral language activity; alertness to various clues and cues that are an integral part of oral communication; and growing effectiveness in discussions as shown by an increasing awareness of the importance of courtesy and relevance as well as the responsibility of knowing when to speak and when to listen."[39]

Tidyman and Butterfield have warned that one cannot stress all skills and abilities at one time, but should stress the specific language goal most needed by the individual or the group.[40] When making an evaluation, it is important to remember that specific comments about strong or weak points contribute more to growth than weak generalities.[41]

The mechanics of evaluation frequently present a problem to the teacher. The suggestion has been made that designated symbols be used as a "shorthand" notation for evaluation of individual pupils during a speaking situation; for example:

| | |
|---|---|
| l | contributions notably relevant, pertinent |
| + | contributions notably for effectiveness of vocabulary, analogy imagery (as well as relevance) |
| g | good generalizations (induction) |
| e | concrete examples of illustrations of concept being discussed; application of a principle (deduction) |
| o | irrelevant attention-getting, foolish, ineffective oral language.[42] |

Keeping a record of evaluations made of each pupil on an individual card provides opportunity for individual diagnosis and for showing evidence of progress over a period of time.

A comparison of the teacher's evaluation of speaking performance to the pupil's evaluation can lead to a better understanding of strengths and weaknesses. Checklists such as the following might be used.

Student's Speech Checklist

I. How do I sound?
   a. Is my voice pleasant to hear?

[37] Thomas A. Hopkins, "The Spoken Word," *Education*, 84 (November, 1963) 166-69.
[38] Wilbert Pronovost, *The Teaching of Speaking and Listening in the Elementary School*. New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1959, pp. 3-4.
[39] Mackintosh, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
[40] Willard F. Tidyman and Marguerite Butterfield, *Teaching the Language Arts*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1959, pp. 38-63, 235-53.
[41] Mackintosh, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
[42] *Ibid.*

b. Can others understand the words I say?
c. Is my voice neither too loud nor too soft?

II. Is my speech interesting to others?
a. Do I use a variety of expressions and words?
b. Do I explain things so others understand my ideas?
c. Do I use language correct for each speaking situation?
d. Do I remember to take my turn to speak—talking neither too much nor too little?

I can improve my voice and speech by_____

Teacher's Speech Checklist

I. Student's voice.
a. Is the voice pleasant?
If not, how would you describe it?_____
b. Are articulation and enunciation satisfactory?
If not, what needs to be improved?_____
c. Is volume appropriate for each occasion?
If not, is it too loud or too soft?

II. Student's speech.
a. Does speech show a variety of expressions and vocabulary?
If not, what needs improving?
b. Does speech give evidence of carethinking?
If not, what seems to be the reason?_____
c. Is usage acceptable?
If not, what faults are most common?_____
d. Is there evidence that personality problems hamper speech quality?
If yes, what seems to be the problem?_____

Examples of the use of dual evaluation checklists for individual speaking situations can be found in *Children and Oral Language*.[43]

Self-evaluation based on pupil-set standards has often been recommended.[44, 45, 46] Such pupil-set standards might be similar to the following:

Do others listen when you tell a personal experience?
Can people follow the directions you give?
Can you take part in discussion without becoming angry or making others angry?
Are you tolerant and respectful of others' viewpoints?
Can you ask for information so that it is willingly given?
Are you accurate and thorough in reporting what you hear or read, so that you give true understanding to others?
Do you like to listen when others talk?[47]

Not only can children set up overall standards for improving speaking skills, but they can be led to formulate standards for each type of speaking occasion—conversation, discussion, reporting, *etc.* Examples of such pupil-set standards can be found in Dawson and Zollinger[48] and Strickland.[49]

Evaluation of the progress of pupils should be done with basic goals kept in mind. "As in other areas of the curriculum, a wide range of individual differences is apparent. The purpose is not to eliminate these differences—not to make every child an orator—but to help each pupil to say those things which are important to him."[50]

"When I went to elementary school I learned to read, write, *speak*, and *listen*." It is to be hoped that this will be the comment of the adolescent of the future. With concerted teaching effort, including effort based upon adequate evaluation, it certainly should be.

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[43] *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

[44] Robert M. Bloom, "A Program for Oral English," *Elementary English*, 41 (February, 1964), 158-64.

[45] Mildred A. Dawson, *Teaching Language in the Grades*. Yonkers, New York: World Book Company, 1951, pp. 177-78.

[46] Dawson and Zollinger, *loc. cit.*

[47] Dawson, *op. cit.*, p. 154, citing Idelle Boyce and Ethel Mabie Falk, "Judging by Results," *Childhood Education*, 14 (January, 1938) 200.

[48] Dawson and Zollinger, *loc. cit.*

[49] Strickland, *loc. cit.*

[50] Bolz, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

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Three Statements Regarding

# Needed Research in Oral Language

## Part I

RUTH G. STRICKLAND*

The dialects of American English show up clearly in elementary school classrooms. The child learns his language from the people closest to him and in settings of informal intimacy. Therefore, what he brings to school is the language of his immediate environment without polish or pretense. The economic and cultural level of his home shines clearly in it, whether his is the language of the college teacher of English, the independent and aspiring small businessman, the demanding skilled craftsman, or the unemployed and willingly dependent drifter on the relief dole. To the student of dialects, the geographic location in which his parents acquired their language is clearly evident.

There are still some elementary schools in the United States in which all of the children are natives of the school community and some have roots that go back for generations. The language of the area is homogeneous because the economic and cultural level of the population is stable and homogeneous. There is little mobility of any kind; few people travel into or out of the area and few either ascend or regress on the social ladder so that the language that is used varies relatively little from generation to generation or from household to household.

In contrast to this, there are elementary schools in which the child population represents a wide range of dialects because the families come from everywhere. Spanish American dialects, deep-south Negro speech, European and Asian accents, and speech from a variety of geographic areas within the United States may all be found in the same classroom. Hill-billy speech and coarse, rough inner-city dialects may appear in groups in which the speech of most of the children at least approximates the "standard English" teachers strive for in the formal work of the classroom.

That speech opens and closes doors to social and economic opportunity is almost a truism. Yet the speech of successful Americans is not always the same. The most forceful evidence of differences in acceptable regional dialects is found in the speech of the last five presidents of the United States: Roosevelt's speech aristocratic suburban New York with a Harvard accent; Truman's Missouri speech that could become coarse and raw on occasion; Eisenhower's Kansas speech modified by West Point and the Army; Kennedy's speech, that of the educated Bostonian whose "idea" and "Cuba" both end in "r"; and finally the enriched and polished but earthy Texan speech of the present White House incumbent. There is no clear-cut American English dialect unless it may be what has come to be called the "network English" of television and radio commentators. Yet teachers are obligated to help all children attain speech of such standard that it will be an asset and not a liability in achieving the objectives of their adult lives.

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All of this is preparatory to saying that research is needed on the dialects children bring to school and what the teacher should do about them. Teachers are often even more mobile than the children they teach and tend, because it is a natural, human reaction to feel that their own language is the standard toward which they should direct the language of their pupils.

Earlier research on children's language was largely done in situations which assumed a general homogeneity. The longitudinal study of Walter Loban is providing badly needed evidence about the growth in language of individual children studied over a thirteen year period as well as developmental trends from year to year. Since the population of his study covered a wide ethnic range, the data provide a gold mine of possibilities for studies of individuals after all of the possible generalizations regarding evidences of rate and kind of maturation have been skimmed off. The studies at Indiana University, and the work of Kellogg Hunt in Florida have provided techniques for the study of children's language which could well be applied to studies of children's dialects as they are found in varying geographic locations and at various social, cultural, and economic levels. An important start in this direction is the work of Mildred Riling in Oklahoma who studied Negro and white children of her area using the plan of analysis of the Indiana study.

Intensive studies are needed of the sound patterns used by various ethnic groups in their everyday speech and attention given to general public reaction to patterns that deviate markedly from what is considered acceptable and standard speech. Regional differences in the sound of "r," for instance, between the speech of the native of rural Maine, the area of Georgia around Atlanta, central Kansas, or northern Minnesota are interesting, yet none of them is substandard. Southern Indiana Hoosiers pronounce "fire" and "far" in identical manner while "rat" and "right" are identical in other geographic areas without causing serious problems in learning to read and write. Conceivably, there are sound patterns in regional speech which denote cultural levels and some which may be handicapping to upward climbing individuals when they leave their own native region. Teachers need to recognize these and strive to modify them while other sound patterns which are equally regional may only add interest to human interaction and cause no problems as their speakers move from place to place.

Vocabulary studies have concentrated rather heavily in the past on supposedly typical populations, many of them in the central northern part of the country. It is true that whether one calls a small stream a "creek," a "crick," a "branch," or a "run," is a matter of regional custom which does not in any way harm communication. The Texan's "I m fixin' to do it" in place of the northerner's "I'm planning to do it" creates no problems. Which regional variations to correct or modify and which to accept as part of the seasoning that makes American English interesting, vital, and colorful is something researchers could well study.

Grammatical structures found in regional dialects may be a more difficult problem. Disregard for tenses and failure to use inflectional endings may be substandard to the point of being unacceptable to most speakers of informal standard English. Disregard for agreement of subject and predicate, even though characteristic of the speech of the most respected speakers in a region, can be handicapping to individuals who want to leave the region.

Studies of children's language such as those suggested here may have strong implications for the teaching of reading and spelling. Differences in sound patterns

may call for different emphases, perhaps even different methodology in teaching sound-symbol corespondences in at least the beginning stages of reading and the same may be true for spelling. It is well known that a high percentage of failure or of low achievement exists among children whose oral language differs from the language of the textbooks. Books on methods and guides to textbook series completely ignore this possibility. Research is needed to determine whether there are problems here, the nature of them, and what should be done about them to permit children with the handicap of deviant language to reach maximum achievement.

All of these examples serve only to sharpen the one central point of this paper. The physical mobility of our population today, the need to help minority groups gain recognition and status, and the growing economic as well as social need to help depressed people of whatever ethnic or social group to climb out of their present state of deprivation and dependency, all have implications for our work with oral language. Teachers need to know as much as possible about the language children use. They need guidance to understand what must be done to help children achieve language that will be an asset, not a liability. Children need to be taught that language can open doors or cut them off from the respect and acceptance they need. Textbooks and courses of study offer no help with any of this. Research is needed to provide teachers with new knowledge that will help them build wholesome and realistic attitudes toward children's language and what needs to be done about it.

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## Part II

HOWARD E. BLAKE AND ANTHONY J. AMATO*

### *Listening*

Listening, while the oldest of the language arts, from the research standpoint is the youngest. Logically, this is the opposite of what one might expect. As late as 1948 only eleven studies of listening had been completed while in another language arts area, reading, about 3,000 studies had been done. It stands to reason, then, that less is known about the teaching of listening than about the other language arts skills.

Listening for the past few years has been a fertile field for research activity. Duker's recent book singularly indicated the extensive research available, nearly all of it having been done since the late 1940's.[1]

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[1] Sam Duker, *Listening Bibliography*. New York: The Scarecrow Press, 1964, 211 pp.

This source reveals that schools, teachers, and publishers have made creative and significant strides in the teaching of listening. But there is still an overwhelming need for more definitive, correlated studies.

In the next few paragraphs we shall point out what our experience has indicated in some of the research needed to make the teaching of listening practicable and realistic.

First of all, we need to know more about what we already know. Or, to say this another way, much has been learned about listening that has not been adequately and widely disseminated. There is a great need for some agency, such as NCTE, to collect, evaluate, and disseminate this body of research evidence. The area of doctoral studies alone has produced a massive number of research investigations, many of them quite scholarly, which by and large are known only by a limited number of people. The late David H. Russell urged that the findings of all these doctoral studies should be compiled.[2] It could be that no better research could contribute to the improvement of listening teaching than that which would accumulate the best of what has already been established.

As to the next area of needed research, evidence during the past few years has shown that a subject can be better learned if its structure has been determined. Although we have considerable knowledge about listening, our present research does not show us its structure, particularly as it relates to elementary school children. Answers are needed to such questions as these: What are the listening skills? What is the priority order of each? What is the sequential order in which they develop? What is the scope and sequence program in listening? At what age can each best be learned? What learning experiences will provide the best setting for learning each skill? What levels of listening should be attained by children at various grade levels? What kinds of classroom organization will best facilitate learning the skills?

Another area in which research is needed is measurement. At the present time there are a very limited number of reliable tests for measuring listening ability. The development of better tests, particularly for use with younger children, that would aid in diagnosing abilities and levels of development will assist teachers in identifying children's listening needs. While considerable determination of listening accomplishment can be made by the experienced teacher through random observations, reliable tests will make it possible to do an even better job.

Last, that language skills are interrelated has been known for many years. But it was not until Strickland's recent study that it was statistically shown that progress in reading, speaking, and writing is directly governed by listening ability.[3] Research of this type indicates that listening is the base from which other language develops. Further rigorous research delving into all the relationships will greatly help to determine the focus of the teaching of listening.

*Speaking*

Children of all ages and of all cultures are linguistic geniuses. From a very early age they show a strong sensitivity to language and when they construct incorrect words and improper sentence patterns, they do not feel that these are distortions of the English language. They cannot understand the adult's concern with oral lan-

[2] David H. Russell, "A Conspectus of Research on Listening Abilities," *Elementary English*, 41 (March, 1964), 266.

[3] Ruth G. Strickland, "The Language of Elementary School Children: Its Relationship to the Language of Selected Children," *Bulletin of the School of Education*, Indiana University, 38 (July, 1962), 131 pp.

guage, for aren't their utterances communicative?

If we accept the premise that achievement in oral language is fundamental to success in the other language skills, why is it that as late as 1964, although there was an increase in the number of studies in written expression, research in speaking had received the least attention?[4] In reviewing the research studies published in various educational journals for the last five years, we found an almost complete void of studies done in oral language, and the studies done were mostly related to speech pathology. Considerable research of a high quality is needed if schools are to be expected to give more than token attention to children's speaking.

For brevity, all of the many facets of speaking, in our opinion, to which research needs to provide answers are listed here.

1. As was mentioned for listening, we need to review, evaluate, and compile more about what we already know. These research and theoretical developments have gone on too long without a concerted effort to bring these developments to the schools and the teachers.[5]

2. In addition, Kornei Chukovsky in his book, *From Two to Five*, tells us that children create without awareness words that use the linguistic devices of a derivative such as "clothesware" and "shoeware."[6] Our present research does not reveal whether there is a structure to the development of vocabulary and sentence patterns. We need to know how children learn about structural meaning and then apply linguistic devices such as analogy and functional meaning to sentence patterns.[7] Additional knowledge in this area would be particularly helpful to those who guide the speech development of children in early childhood.

3. Another major issue is the lack of guidance and consensus on skills needed, when needed, and standards for evaluating these skills.

4. Is there a sequential order in the development of speaking skills? Would knowledge of this structure be helpful for the building of sequential programs in speaking?

5. Which skills should be given priority and at which age levels?

6. What further needs to be known of the influences of different environmental factors, such as parents, siblings, peers, teachers, upon the acquisition of speaking abilities?

7. Would the knowledge of and instruction in linguistics and its structure assure higher success in speaking?

8. How do oral reading and materials used in such directed activities affect the development of speaking skills in children?

9. What are the effects of the teacher's speech patterns on his students and their attitudes toward acceptable speech?

10. What are the effects of associative and projective techniques as a stimulus for providing skills in speaking?

11. What are the effects of the teacher-behavior language pattern on the speech patterns of the children?

12. What kinds of classroom organization will best facilitate learning the speech skills?

13. What are the effects of audiovisual

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[4] Walter T. Petty and Paul C. Burns, "A Summary of Investigations Related to the English Language Arts in Elementary Education: 1965," *Elementary English*, 42 (April, 1965), 411-430.

[5] Robert F. Hogan, "English," *New Curriculum Developments*. Washington, D. C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1965, p. 16.

[6] Kornei Chukovsky, *From Two to Five*, translated and edited by Miriam Norton. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963, p. 160.

[7] C. Wilson Graham, "The Structure of English," *The Structure of Knowledge and the Curriculum*, edited by G. W. Ford and Lawrence C. Pugno. Chicago, Illinois: Rand McNally & Company, 1964, pp. 74-76.

drills in promoting acceptable language skills in children of different cultures and in different socioeconomic levels?

14. What is the influence of bilingualism upon speaking?

15. How does the study of foreign languages in the elementary school influence the speaking of the English language?

16. What is the relationship between a child's language patterns and his image of himself?

17. What is the influence of the sociometric design of peer groups upon their oral language?

18. What types of evaluation can be created to measure the quality and the spontaneity of oral language development in children?

19. What effects do oral language drills have on the spontaneity of language development?

Since speech is biological in origin, physiological in mechanism, and predominately sociological in function, oral language can be studied in many different ways. We feel there are many facets of oral expression still uncharted. More venturesome research designs which might produce more creative studies in oral expression are needed. Without a full understanding of listening and speaking, the two basic skills in language, it will be questionable to expect that reading and writing programs can ever become any better than they exist today.

## Part III

WALTER T. PETTY

The primacy of oral over written language in communication is talked about, written about, and generally proclaimed. It is a primacy that no one seems to question. Yet is spite of this recognition, and regardless of the urging of leading educators over the past thirty years, the instructional emphasis in schools has not actually reflected this primacy. Of course much time during the school day is devoted to speaking and listening, though this may not be as much a conscious acknowledgement of the importance of oral language as it is a simple necessity. The presence of oral language units in English textbooks, particularly in those used in the elementary school, is some reflection of concern and change from an earlier day. But language use, arising from classroom activities or from following a textbook, is not language instruction. There still is too little teaching of the skills needed for effective speaking and listening.

The task of getting research knowledge known and accepted by teachers has always been a problem—one of no less consequence to oral language than to other curricular areas. This is a problem that in itself must be given research attention. However, beyond this, a major reason for the recognition and urging having resulted in so little concrete effort and accomplishment is simply that there are so many gaps in our knowledge of what to teach and how to go about teaching it. These knowledge gaps are thus the only evidence the perceptive and creative investigator should need to stimulate research effort.

Educational research is not easy, however. If it were, there would surely be many fewer knowledge gaps than we now have. Neither, though, is it impossible. Good research has been done and the prospects are favorable for the amount of such research to increase. Likewise, there is evidence that the quality of research will rise.

The principal faults of much that has been done are the small-scale and short-term efforts that have been made, the uncoordinated nature of much investigation, the too frequent errors in research design and implementation, and the considerable amount of misdirected drawing of conclusions. A further shortcoming has been the attention given to atomistic and tangential language items or issues, with a corresponding failure to focus upon the basic research needed for a foundation of knowledge upon which investigation of teaching techniques and curricular arrangements could later be built. These have been no more the faults of research in oral expression and reception than in others of the language arts areas, but they are faults it is now possible to correct.

With increasing support and encouragement from the U.S. Office of Education and other national and state agencies, research can be coordinated and attention directed to basic problems. And with our better knowledge of research design, and the opportunities ensuing from data processing and transistorized recording equipment, the quality of research should mount.

The sampling of children's oral language in greater quantity, and with greater ease, has already begun and has led to important analyses of grammatical, syntactical, and phonological patterns, but attention now needs to be given to the sampling of the language used in the many natural but quite varied situations in which children speak. Particularly, attention needs to be given to the study of oral language as it is allied with all behavior, to the extent to which speech varies in dissimilar situations, and to specific speech patterns as they are related to particular behavioral actions and expressions of personality. And, of course, these factors all need to be studied as they pertain to social, cultural, educational, and economic variations in our society.

Much of the oral language instructional effort now being made in schools is directed at changing the pronunciation and syntax of the speech of a considerable proportion of the children. This is being done in contradiction to the evidence that large numbers of these "errors" represent "standard" speech to many persons. The justification for this instruction is that communication may be harmed through the use of substandard speech and that such usage may affect the social adaptability of the child in his adult years. Yet we have not securely established a defined "standard" speech to direct our instruction toward, nor have we determined whether it is desirable—to individuals and to society—to direct instruction toward a single standard. There are other unanswered questions which are a part of this general assumption that substandard speech must be changed. For example, do we really know which phonological, syntactical, or lexical deviations interfere with communication through their effects upon the listener? Certainly there are effects, but should we not identify these deviations and the ways in which they affect communication? Too, do we know which ones actually interfere with social mobility?

In our concern with substituting "acceptable" for "unacceptable" vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammatical structure in speech, too little attention is generally given to composition. Yet perhaps it is the composition of an oral expression that has most to do with achieving satisfactory communication. And perhaps it is the

quality of composition—the way thoughts are put together—that has the most to do with social acceptability and economic achievement. This is an area that needs more investigation. We need to know what compositional structure is most effective in specific situations. We need better to identify the elements of different composition structures. We need to know what factors influence the learning of these elements and the learning of these structures.

Language authorities have long stated that children need models to pattern their speech upon, citing as evidence for this opinion the fact that the child has learned his language prior to attending school from imitating his parents and others in the home environment. Thus the teacher as a model has been stressed and, more recently, the presentation of speech models through the use of recordings has been suggested. Yet many teachers state that the watching of television does not appear to affect the structure of children's speech (though particular words and some expressions may be adopted). This suggests that personal ties are needed between the child and his model for speech to be materially affected. This subject needs much more investigation, with particular study of the kinds of personal ties that have the most influence. Investigation should also be made of the relationships of particular kinds of personal ties to specific factors in speech.

Related also to personalities is the evidence that assurance in speaking has a bearing upon its effectiveness. Such evidence brings forth numerous questions, any of which might be the subject of study. For example, what brings about this assurance? And how does the assurance specifically relate to effectiveness? To what extent does a teacher's personality affect the assurance of the pupils in his class? Does his personality affect all the pupils in the same ways, to the same degree? To what extent is assurance developed through the interaction of personalities, and what are the characteristics in these personalities that bear upon assurance?

The opening of the door to consideration of research needs in oral language makes it difficult to close, and, of course, it should not be closed. The questions needing answering through research are of an indeterminate number, with each question posed leading to others. But each answer brings us nearer to bridging the gaps in the knowledge necessary to effectively teach children to speak and listen thoughtfully, constructively, and with benefit to themselves and society.